

CRYPT OF CTHULHU

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Debatable and Disturbing EDITORIAL SHARDS

Here is yet another issue of Crypt of Cthulhu in whose case one cannot answer the question, "What is it about?" Some readers prefer our grab-bag issues to those centering about a particular theme. And if the present issue is a fair example, such readers cannot easily be blamed. For we offer original fiction from the pens of Lin Carter, Gary Myers, and Robert E. Howard. About the REH piece a special word should be said. "The Fear-Master," though structurally rounded off, is almost certainly a fragment, since various characters, once introduced, are not developed or never show up again. But it is a substantial bit of Howard prose, and we are pleased to present it, despite having to wince at its characteristic racism.

Passing on now to articles and analyses, there is no dearth of them. Almost any of them might be singled out for special attention, but we will arbitrarily choose three. We should note that Sam Moskowitz' piece first appeared in the Spring 1948 issue of Fantasy Commentator, which had a circulation of about 150, so we doubt too many of you will have seen it! Dr. Mary Eileen McNamara's article, too, has been rescued from early oblivion in the pages of a local college publication where it first appeared. By the way, she is a psychiatrist working in New Haven, Connecticut. Finally, Brian Lumley has consented to respond to our recent review essay "Brian Lumley--Reanimator" in order to mediate a reader controversy, only the iceberg's tip of which has surfaced in "Mail-Call of Cthulhu."

Robert M. Price, Editor

The Thing Under Memphis

FROM THE NECRONOMICON (I, ii)

By Lin Carter

NOTE: This is the infamous Second Narrative from the Necronomicon; it directly follows "The Doom of Yakthoob" and is itself followed by "The City of Pillars." More than a few scholars have noticed how this collection of first-person narratives (evidently drawn from Alhazred's own career as a sorcerer and necromancer) seems closely modeled upon the "Episodes of Elbon of Mhu Thulan," the second book of the Livre d'Ivonis. In both of these compilations of hellish lore they seem to serve the identical purpose, i. e., as precautionary tales designed to alert the student of sorcery to the numerous perils attendant upon such studies.

-- L. C.

Innumerable and noxious are those secrets still surviving from this planet's unmemoried and mythic Prime; and in malodorous gulphs beneath earth's crust, where seethe the mephitic vapours of the Vault and Sepulchre, there yet lurk on into our day, suspended betwixt sleep and death, a madness out of time and a horror from beyond the spheres; and rash indeed is he who would dare arouse them from their deserved rest.¹

Alas, the greedy lust which ever goadeth such as we to ferret out forbidden wisdom from the adyts of the Past, to pry into the profoundest and most fearful arcana of cycles anterior to our own, to search for secrets better left deep-buried and unknown, and to awaken from this sleeping death That which even the endless ages have forgot and which

were by men also best left alone and unremembered.

All this is dreadful truth, as well did I, Alhazred, know; and yet I could not yield to the inevitable defeat of my desires, which the demise and doom of Yakthoob forced upon me; and in the fullness of Time it became my firmest resolve to pursue withouten guide nor mentor the secrets of those Mysteries concealed from men for aeons in the subterranean abyss and in the darksome and unwholesome places of the Elder World.

And thus it eventuated that, at length, I rose up and went forth from the sealed and hidden Vale of Hadot amidst the sombre, stony hills of Neb, which rise anear the crawling floods of the immemorial and mystic Nile, together with those few who followed me and who, with me, had learnt the Elder Lore from the lips of the Saracen wizard, our aforesight Master.

Ere long our journey led us to that desolate and lonely waste of shifting sands which stretched under the cold mockery of the leering Moon, not far from the immense and antique wreckage of riven shards and sundered stone by men called Memphis. Here of old the pshent-crowned Pharaohs reigned and revelled, the same that now sleep long, slow ages by, soaked in bitter natron and wound in spiced winding-sheets, in secret crypts burrowed beneath the tall cliffs of the Valley of the Kings.

And here, amidst the desert sands, there croucheth that elder eidolon of shapen stone fashioned by our forefathers into the likeness of a Crouch-

ing Beast. And when my followers beheld the fearful thing they faltered and fell back; hence, disdaining to bemock the folly of their fear, I forward went alone, with but the boldest of my fellows at my heels, a valiant youth called Ibraheem.

And thus it was that we went through that Secret Door that lieth between the out-stretched paws of the mighty Sphinx, that sinister and brooding thing of stone that hath from of old made of the bleak and barren waste its lair, and which looks ever into the visage of Eternity with unblinking and with cryptic gaze, smiling its slight, its knowing, and its sardonic smile.

Through the portal we passed, and by the Hidden Stair that leadeth down and down to profound and nighted crypts that lie long-hid beneath the vast necropolis of Memphis. But once before, in years long antecedent to this, had the learned Yakhhoobled us hither by this gloomy way, to grovel before That which may by subtle craft be summoned to the Pits below time-ruined Memphis from dark realms contiguous to its own. And thus at length came Ibraheem and I into a vast and high-roofed Vault, where by the feeble luminance of flickering tapers did we draw twin Circles on the pave thereof, both the Circle of Protection where amidst we twain would stand, and the Circle of Protection that should hold ye Thing (and these Two be needful, lest ye Thing be untimely loos'd and come Ravenging against us), and touched to malodorous fumes certain Suffumigations as were requisite, and howled the Words and the Name. Thus did we dare invoke Great Tsathoggua, who was old when the very stars were young, and who came down from remote, trans-cosmic gulfs when this earth was but newly-formed and bore as yet no life, save for the formless and mewling efts of the

Prime.

Black and plastic was the quivering Bulk thereof, befurred, swag-bellied and obscene, and in His awful visage there were blent the salient characteristics of Bat and Toad and Sloth; and He squatted there in the centre of the Circle and in a deep and sleepy Voice bade us speak wherefor we had call'd Him from His age-old slumbers. Now, Ibraheem was palsied with terror and sick with loathing of the Stench, but I, who was made of sterner stuff, made bold to speak the desires that seethed within my heart. Wherefore the Black Thing taught us the Mao Games and the wording of the Uthgos Chant, and spake of the Secret Parable of Byagoona the Faceless, and of very much more.² Aye, 'twas from the very Lips of Tsathoggua that I learnt those formulae by which ye may command the demons; all of the formulae between the Yr and the Nhngnр became thus mine, and great Power thereby, for those Demons dwell in spheres apart from this, upon the far side of Kadath Itself.³

All of these secrets and many more I mastered in the darkness of that malodorous and mephitic Vault 'neath the ancient city, but when it came to pass that I had gained all of the Knowledge that I sought, and that my over-wearied brain could learn no more, and I uttered aloud the Rites of Banishment, the toad-like and squatting Thing only grinned, and licked its lips with a long tongue like a slimy white Worm, and stirred not from its coign, neither did it vanish.

Then it was, in very truth, that fear gnawed at my vitals and my companion gazed at me with terror in his eyes, for we both perceived that the Thing which we had summoned hither with such ease was not with such ease sent back to the place of Its abiding. Wherefore have I aforetime said, and here repeat

again, Do not call up Any that you cannot put down.⁴

Now we had summoned hither Dread Tsathoggua by means of the Voola Ritual⁵ which summoneth up from the nighted caverns under earth That which lurketh far beneath the crust, and the Banishment we had in vain performed was as pertaineth to that Ritual. Howsomever, as it seemed notably lacking in efficacy, did I strive with every rite of Banishment and Dismissal known to me to send the Black Thing back to lightless N'kai: but it did not seem within my Knowledge or my Power to effect that which I so devoutly wished.

And all the while mine acolyte stared at me with eyes wide with terror in a face as pale as whey...

At length I resolved, in the uttermost extremity of my Fear and Peril, upon a desperate recourse. Seizing up the slight form of my disciple, the hapless and affrighted Ib-raheem, I flung him squalling from the precincts of the Circle of Protection and in such a wise that he fell prone and helpless upon the pave betwixt the toadlike feet of the squatting Thing (the which bent Its loathsome Head to investigate this unexpected Offering, which mewled and slithered 'neath the questing Tongue thereof, and the drooling Lips; and, as the Screaming commenced and I saw that Tsathoggua was otherwise occupied, I then prudently took to my heels and fled from those accursed and noisome Vaults, and up the Secret Stair, and henceforth into the clean air and wholesome light of dawning, and departed forthwith from that place with my Followers at

my heels, and we betook ourselves by slow and easy progress towards the deserts of Arabia Felix and that City of the Pillars, even ill-rumored Irem, the which lieth thereamidst.

THE NOTES

Title. Lovecraft refers to "that Dark Thing below Memphis" in his novel, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward.

¹Lovecraft employs this phrase "a madness out of time and a horror from beyond the spheres" in Charles Dexter Ward, although without identifying it as a quotation from Alhazred.

²"The Mao Games" were first mentioned by Arthur Machen in one of his fine stories; the "Uthgos Chant" is referred to by Ramsey Campbell in his tale "The Render of the Veils"; the only mention I have seen of the "Secret Parable of Byagoona the Faceless" was in Robert Bloch's story "The Grinning Ghoul."

³According to Lovecraft (in "The Dunwich Horror"), the Yr and the Nhhngr are formulae, but in The Lurker at the Threshold, Derleth mentions them as places beyond Kadath where certain demons dwell. My clearer reading of the disputed passage, given above, seemingly reconciles the apparent discrepancy.

⁴This phrase appears in Charles Dexter Ward, although not as a quotation from Alhazred.

⁵The Voola Ritual is employed in this same manner in Ramsey Campbell's story, "The Mine on Yuggoth."

-- Lin Carter

The Priest of Mlok

By Gary Myers

Three nights before the coming of Mlok to earth, Lohi was foretold of it in a dream. This Lohi was very old and very holy, having dwelt all alone in his lowly hut on the edge of the Bnazic desert for more years than anyone could remember, and in all those years having spoken to no one but his gods. But some months previous to the time of which I write he had taken to himself a disciple. When Lohi awoke from dreaming of Mlok he instructed Nin (for such was the disciple's name) to prepare for a week's sojourn in the desert, for he was determined to be the first of men to offer himself to Mlok.

At evening they set out, Lohi and Nin and the camel that carried their baggage. Lohi rode with the baggage, for his years had made him feeble, but Nin went on foot. They traveled eastward, chasing their shadows away from the setting sun; and fast as they went their shadows went faster still, gaining upon them steadily until they lost them in the night. They traveled by night, because only then was the fierce heat of the desert abated, and because on that trackless plain Lohi could plot their course only by the stars. The stars were holy to his gods and he besought their guidance with interminable prayers.

So it was that Nin first heard of the object of their quest. A new god was about to declare himself to men, and they would witness his advent. They would greet him in the name of men and lead him out of the desert to the cities where they dwelt, where he would be honored above all gods as his priest would be honored above all priests. That was what the prayers told Nin of the object of their quest. Thereafter he watched the

sky for portents even as closely as he did the ground for snakes.

Toward the end of the third night his vigil was rewarded, when a star broke free of its heavenly sphere and fell to earth. Full in the east it fell, screaming to wake the thunder, which growled and growled below the horizon long after the screaming was still.

Next evening a demon of stubbornness entered the camel, and neither the soft words of Lohi nor the hard blows of Nin could drive it out again. There was nothing for it but to leave him, so Nin took his master upon his back and trudged away. He had not trudged far before a wall of sand arose between him and the stars. The wall was not steep for all its height, and Nin could have climbed it easily without Lohi; but having climbed it he found that he could go no farther, because of the pit the wall enclosed. The full moon shone across its mouth but only the stars shone down its throat. And by their light Nin dimly saw great boulders protruding like teeth from high up along its sloping sides.

Lohi did not look into the pit, for he knew what it contained. Instead he knelt with his back to it and prayed a final prayer. He prayed not to the stars, for they were not so holy now that Mlok had forsaken them to sojourn among men. He prayed not to the stars but to the pit. For there the falling star had borne Mlok to earth and earth had opened to receive him, and there he waited for his priest to come. And this was the burden of Lohi's prayer, that he should be found acceptable to Mlok, that ninety years of faithful service should not go unrewarded.

Nin too had served the gods, for seven long months had he served them. But the prayer of a feeble old man stood between him and his reward. So he picked up a heavy stone and silenced the offending prayer forever.

Then he knelt a little apart from Lohi and prayed a prayer of his own: He prayed not as Lohi had done, an old man dwelling on the past. No, a new cult needed new blood and Nin was the man to provide it. He dwelt not on the past but on the future, on all the years he had still to dedicate to the service of the god. But the burden of his prayer was ever the same, that he should be found ac-

ceptable to Mlok.

It was then that Nin looked under him and saw that his shadow was not his own. Something had come between him and the moonlight, something that had not a human shape. He looked sideways out of the corner of his eye, and saw the tip of a questing tentacle wriggle past him on its way to the murdered Lohi. Look backward he dared not. But when the tentacle recoiled from the dead face of Lohi, and turned toward Nin, he bowed his head as if to receive a blessing.

The offering was acceptable to Mlok.

The Fear-Master

By Robert E. Howard

When I stepped out of the boat that had brought me up-river to my uncle's trading-post, I wasn't impressed with the view, to say the least. The bungalow, the store-houses, even the natives clustered about the makeshift wharf failed to rouse any interest in me; while the muddy current of the river, the scrawny fields and the tangled woods in the distance positively depressed me. But I was hot and tired and the mosquitoes had been intolerable. I clambered out of the boat, the insistent chattering of the Kroo boatmen demanding their pay grating my nerves until they fairly shrieked. Why I had ever come to the West Coast at all was beyond me at the moment.

Boys picked up my scanty luggage and started ahead of me toward the house. I followed without enthusiasm, except to get in out of the sun that seemed to beat through my cork helmet, a thing I loathed and wore only from necessity.

So far I had seen no sign of a white person, but just as I mounted the veranda steps, the door was flung open with a haste and vigor which I considered positively disgusting, considering the heat, and a figure was framed in the doorway. I stopped short and stared. A girl! That capped a series of disagreeable though petty incidents rather suitably. In a vague way I knew that my uncle had two or three daughters, but when I thought of them at all, which was seldom, I supposed that they were where they should be--in some prim boarding school in England.

So I stood and stared and wondered in a dumb way if there were any more. Apparently she was the entire stock;

she ran out onto the veranda and greeted me with a warmth which always embarrasses me. I shook hands vaguely and heard myself inquiring about my uncle.

"He's away up-country and I am in charge of the trading-post." Thereby revealing that such was not a usual arrangement but one which caused her much pride.

"Isn't that nice?" I mumbled idiotically, being unable to think of anything to say. I was almost reeling from fatigue and general discomfort from the African weather. She led me into the house where it was somewhat cooler, and a servant came and presently put a whiskey-and-soda at my elbow, which I drank and felt somewhat refreshed. Then I looked my cousin over carefully.

She could hardly be called a beauty, although she seemed rather pretty, even to my eye. Her hair was a light gold and her best feature were her eyes, which were large, grey and clear. Her small nose was tilted at a saucy angle which prevented her being a real beauty, but gave her an impish, mischievous expression that was somewhat appealing. As for her age, I suppose she was about sixteen. A mere child in some climes, but women blossom fast in the tropics.

"So my uncle left you in charge of the post," I said, as if musing aloud.

"Well, what of it?" she asked, youthfully quick to sense disapproval--and to resent it.

"Nothing whatever," I murmured. "I but applauded his wisdom." Which was not so bad for one unused to gallantry.

"If you'll show me my room, I

believe I will take a nap," I went on, trying to excuse myself gracefully.

She was kind enough to do so and I threw myself on the bed without even removing my boots.

But scarcely had I done so when the door opened again and my cousin re-entered.

Cursing silently, I started to rise, but she came over and pushed me back quite firmly.

"Steve," she said, bubbling with laughter, "let's quit playing. I know it's torture for you to keep on being polite and all that stuff. So let's be friends from the start. After all, we're relatives." And then dropping her air of levity, "I am glad you came, Steve. I don't know whether I could have managed the post or not."

"I'll help you all I can," I replied. "Though, gosh knows, I don't know anything about running a trading post."

"It isn't that, exactly," she answered. "But--but I've been afraid. You see there's been a mysterious native lurking around the village. I've seen him a few times, but the natives won't talk about him. I suppose he's a kind of fetish-man. He daubs his face and body with colored clay until he can't be recognized, and only appears occasionally in the jungle and at the edge of the native villages, that is, to white people. And a stray native like that isn't a good thing to have in the vicinity.

"Well, I was riding along a jungle trail one day on a pony I have, and I saw the mysterious native. There was a native girl tied to a tree, and, oh, I can't hardly stand to think about it, but the beast had marked her horribly with a knife. He didn't see me until I was right on him and I just laid into him with my riding crop. I got in a dozen good lashes before he broke and ran for the jungle. And just at the edge of the trees he

stopped, gazed at me for a moment, and then vanished. I took the poor girl to her village and the beastly natives wouldn't touch her, so I brought her here and made a house-girl out of her, but she ran away.

"And ever since," she shuddered, "I've had the feeling that someone, or something, was trying to harm me. Of course I don't know who the strange native was. But once or twice I'm sure that I've heard footsteps about the bungalow when there shouldn't have been. And I've been afraid."

I sat up. "If you will hand me my valise, I will be much obliged."

She seemed rather puzzled. "Why do you want your valise, if you were foolish enough to bring such a thing into the bush?"

"It contains a pair of excellent Colt revolvers," I explained wearily. "I will go forth and shoot this disturber of the peace and return in time for lunch, with your permission."

"You certainly are what you Americans call a tenderfoot," she remarked quite frankly. "How would you know what native to suspect? I've tried my best to find out and I haven't succeeded. And besides, you couldn't shoot him if you found him."

"Why not?" I asked with what I considered great sarcasm. "Is he bullet-proof?"

She threw out her hands helplessly.

"Oh dear!" she said, with an emphasis that made the mild expression sound like profanity. "Can't you understand that this is Africa and not America? You can't go out and shoot a Negro any time you want to as you do there. They are stronger than we."

"If you'll tell me what to do I'll do it," I told her, knowing that I thereby lowered myself in her estimation and caring not at all.

"Good." And her eyes seemed to flash in triumph. Women have outgrown many things, but the pleasure derived from giving orders to one of the masculine gender is not one of them.

"Take your nap now and later I'll show you all I can about the post."

After she had left I made myself comfortable. I did not give overmuch meditation to what she had told me. I was unfamiliar with women, but I had heard that they were prone to be afraid of things. Born and raised in Arizona of good Virginia fighting stock, I held "niggers" in contempt and was a strong believer in Nordic--and especially Celtic--superiority.

The room I occupied faced the distant jungle and I dozed off to sleep, looking at the shutter which kept out the glaring light. How long I slept I have no idea. A slight sound awakened me and I opened my eyes and again looked at the shutter. And I distinctly saw it move. I was out of the bed and across the room in an instant, gun in hand. I flung open the shutters with a swift movement, for speed is often better than caution, and looked out. The jungle loomed in the distance. The corner of a store-house came within the range of my vision, some two hundred yards away. But there was no sign that anyone had stood outside that window a second before. The ground was hard and no footprints showed. The screen had no latch to keep it in place and the shutters had not been fastened. I decided not to speak of it to my cousin Geraldine.

That evening as we sat in the cool darkness on the veranda, with a smudge fire going in a kind of iron dish, I became aware of a sound. At first I did not recognize it as a sound. It vibrated, it filled the air. I listened, answering my cousin's remarks absently if at all. Thud, thud,

thud!

"Native drums," I said, involuntarily aloud.

"At the native villages," she answered. "Sometimes that almost frightens me. Of late they've been hitting it up livelier than usual--"

Her voice trailed off into silence as she saw that I was not listening.

Thud, thud, thudda, thud, thud!

Softly the drums whispered through the night. Drum answering drum as the villages talked to each other in the language of Africa.

Why is it that a man's whole being leaps in fierce response to the song of the drums? What is it in the thrum of wood on stretched hide that strikes a responsive note in the soul of a man? Not in the drums of civilization; only a savage can make a drum and instill into it the wild rhythm of the primitive. And I, though I had never even seen a native dance, nor even a drum, could see the naked figures leaping and swaying in the mad orgy, the firelight making the shadows leap and dance in time with the leaping dancers, reflecting on the trees of the surrounding jungle. So the first men danced. And I, with ten thousand years of culture behind me, felt the wild urge, felt the rhythm of the drums surge within me. Man is not far from the primordial. I have felt its urge again and again. But never stronger than when, sitting on the veranda of a West Coast bungalow, I heard the native drums for the first time.

I rose early the next morning and strolled down to the river. The few natives who were stirring eyed me askance it seemed to me. I never had a way with natives as some men have. If I seek to treat them kindly it seems that they grow insolent, that they feel that I fear them. Possibly some of the house servants had heard Geraldine giving me directions and despised me as a man who took or-

ders from a woman. At any rate they seemed needlessly sullen.

I addressed one whom I knew understood and spoke English.

"Get me a boat. I want to take a turn on the river."

He eyed me insolently and did not speak. I repeated my request.

Still he leered at me and suddenly my anger broke bounds.

"You black devil," I said softly, as is my custom. "You understand me."

And I stepped toward him, measuring the distance to his jaw. But just then a hand caught my arm and I turned to meet Geraldine's disapproving eye.

"Steve! You mustn't hit him. You have to treat these natives with kindness."

"I wanted a boat--" I began.

"No white man ever go on river this early," broke in the native, impudently, speaking an excellent brand of English for a native. And he gave me a sneering look that brought him nearer to a beating than he guessed.

"Come on to the house, Steve," Geraldine ordered peremptorily, pulling me away. "That boy is all right. He is mission educated."

"Jerry," I protested, "I don't believe you're handling these fellows right. I don't know anything about it, but I know American blacks and I don't believe there's much difference."

She retorted somewhat tartly and I yielded with a shrug of my shoulders. I was humble enough because of my ignorance of everything thereabouts and willing to take orders, even from a girl not as old as myself. So I followed her instructions to the best of my ability. But everywhere I met with more or less concealed insolence and covert sneers. Except the house servants. They were perfect in their behavior, especially one, named B'Oona, who

seemed a kind of man-of-all-work. He was a short, lean Negro, below average height, but with muscles like cords. He spoke English, was well-versed in all the duties of a houseboy and his attitude was always respectful.

A day or so after my arrival, the sullenness of the natives manifested itself strongly. Jerry told me that three-fourths of the workmen had returned to their village.

"And there was the new field to be cleared for yams," said she. "I don't understand. I've treated them well. I believe that strange Negro is the cause. But one of the store-houses needs a new roof. I'm going to go and have the stores shifted until the roof can be put on."

I strolled out with her.

A group of natives were lolling in the shade of the store-house.

Jerry spoke to them in their own language and they replied.

She turned a rather scared face to me.

"They say they won't work unless I give them rum," she said nervously. "I don't dare do that."

"Let me handle them," I told her, and put her out of the way before she could object. I strode forward and ordered one of the blacks to get up. He leered up at me and I calmly drove my foot in his face. That brought him up with a bound, hand groping for the Housa dagger in his loincloth, but he slumped to the earth again, half-senseless, as the barrel of my Colt thudded over his head. The others leaped to their feet and crouched, eager yet hesitant to attack. A big, sinister-faced fellow, who did not seem to be a post-boy, stalked over and addressed me grandly.

"White man--" he began, and got no further for with deliberate venom I crashed my fist into his mouth and he went down.

"I did not give you leave to speak," I said softly, and the others looked at me as if I were a devil, as indeed I was at that moment.

"Get you to work," I said softly, my words almost caressing. And my gun spat, whipping the earring from a native's ear.

And to work they went with frantic haste.

I felt a timid tug at my arm and turned. And my pretty cousin recoiled.

"Steve! Your eyes! They--they look like--like a wolf's!"

I shook off my venomous rage with an effort.

"I think they'll mind now," I told her.

"That man you struck is the broth-

er of Nguru, chief of the Jakri," she said fearfully.

I glanced at him; he was getting up, rubbing his mouth. I drew my gun and walked over to him, beckoning to one of the natives who spoke English.

"Go to your village," I said, "and say to your chief that if all the men who ran away, and a dozen more likewise, are not at the trading post before the sun is there," pointing, "the chief's brother--" and I tapped the native's head with my pistol muzzle. The other understood. He raced away. And long before the time designated, the runaways came swarming back into the post. And from that day the natives called me the Fear-Master.

AVAILABLE IN MAY

Robert E. Howard, Two-Fisted Detective Stories containing "The Silver Heel," "The Voice of Death," "Sons of Hate," and an untitled Steve Harrison synopsis. All previously unpublished. Cover by Stephen E. Fabian. \$4.50

STILL AVAILABLE

Risque Stories #1 "Spicy" fiction and poetry by Sam Walser, Lin Carter, Duane Rimel, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith. Cover by Stephen E. Fabian. \$3.00.

Bran Mak Morn: A Play, and Others by Robert E. Howard. \$4.50 (Only a handful of copies left!)

SOON AVAILABLE

Shudder Stories #1 featuring new and previously unpublished "weird menace" fiction:

"Guests of the Hoodoo Room" by Robert E. Howard
 "The Phantom from 512" by Carl Jacobi
 "The Room Above the Top" by Hugh B. Cave
 Cover by Stephen E. Fabian. Price as yet uncertain.

John Buchan : A Possible Influence on Lovecraft

By Sam Moskowitz

In the field of the mystery story the name of John Buchan has been all but immortalized because of his fine novel The Thirty-Nine Steps. Short of a few about Sherlock Holmes there are scarcely any titles better known, particularly in view of the literally continuous reprinting of the story since its original appearance and the showing and reshowing of its cinema adaptation. Thus a book by this author with so provocative a title as The Watcher at the Threshold--bringing to mind Hichens' Lurker at the Threshold and Lovecraft's "Thing on the Doorstep"--would seem to promise interesting fare for connoisseurs of supernatural fiction, and upon reading it this promise was more than amply fulfilled. The Watcher at the Threshold proved to be a collection of short stories of noteworthy merit, one of which--"No Man's Land"--showed sufficiently close similarity to certain works of H. P. Lovecraft to warrant careful study.

But before this is attempted, let us establish one or two important facts. First of all, the chronology: John Buchan's book was first published in this country in 1918, shortly before Lovecraft composed very much supernatural fiction. And probably the story that is of chief interest to us appeared in magazine form previous to that date, as it was Buchan's policy to sell his work to periodicals prior to collecting it in book form. This naturally brings up the question, "Was Lovecraft familiar with his writings?" Even if we did not know that Lovecraft was a

regular reader of the Munsey magazines, where much of Buchan's fiction was published, we could answer this question in the affirmative by referring to "Supernatural Horror in Literature," where Lovecraft stated as follows:

In the novel Witch-Wood John Buchan depicts with tremendous force a survival of the evil Sabbat in a lonely district of Scotland. The description of the black forest with the evil stone, and of the terrible cosmic adumbrations when the horror is finally extirpated, will repay one for wading through the very gradual action and plethora of Scottish dialect. Some of Mr. Buchan's short stories are also extremely vivid in their spectral intimations; The Green Wildebeast, a tale of African witchcraft, The Wind in the Portico, with its awakening of dead Brittano-Roman horrors, and Skule Skerry with its touches of sub-arctic fright, being especially remarkable.

There is scant criticism and undisguised admiration in the foregoing.

Before speaking of similarities, one obvious dissimilarity between the work of the two authors should be cited. It must be firmly emphasized that their styles of writing do not even remotely resemble each other. But the likenesses of technique are in one instance so striking as to lead one to the conclusion that the basic plot framework of Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythology tales might

conceivably have impinged on his mind while reading "No Man's Land" by John Buchan.

Let us now consider the essential ingredients of the later Lovecraft stories, the devices he utilized which helped them become unique among those of other authors of the macabre. First we find expert use of local color. Descriptions of the New England scene are always vivid and detailed. Authenticity is lent stories like "The Shadow over Innsmouth" by references to architecture, the looks of the stores, the state of repair of the roads, the local industries. In "The Dunwich Horror" one finds detailed descriptions of the countryside and more especially the inhabitants, the condition of their farms, characteristic provincialisms of speech and the local superstitions. Second, there is mention of the "Elder Gods"--frequent references to older races than man which once held sway upon the earth. Though they have lost supremacy they still lurk behind tenuous barriers, ready to unleash their powers if probed at by incautious investigators. Third, we have imaginary books. In Lovecraft's case it is the Necronomicon, fabulous weird tome which has successfully become a part of the mythology of supernatural literature. And fourth, there is some unspeakable horror. Lovecraft incessantly referred to and hinted at horrors too awful to be imagined. Perhaps one of the greatest failings of his work, in this writer's opinion, was the apparent inability of his imagination to conceive anything horrible enough to justify his elaborate build-ups.

In "No Man's Land" John Buchan uses all the above-listed ingredients in the identical well-balanced fashion that typifies Lovecraft's later tales. There may or may not be some significance to the fact that Lovecraft

did not--to the best of my knowledge--write any story embodying these essentials prior to 1919. In 1920 there emerged "Nyarlathotep," a sort of experimental beginning of a new type of story; and then in 1921 "The Nameless City," a full-fledged tale of the type which made the author famous, though not equal to later ones since it lacked their authentic New England background and suffered somewhat from admixture of a Dunsanian influence. But in "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" we find a perfect fruition of technique involving the four essential ingredients. Using these stories as a measuring stick, let us proceed with the examination of Buchan's effort.

"No Man's Land" is laid against the background of the black Scottish hills. It clearly shows that Buchan's knowledge of Scotland, its geographical features, historicity, people, and their way of speaking and thinking is, if anything, above Lovecraft's class. Its style, of course, is not akin to Lovecraft's studied, scholarly approach, but makes much freer use of emotional accentuations. Dialect is handled with the facility and accuracy of a master.

As for the "Elder Gods," consider this description of Buchan's hero's musings early in the tale:

And then with some uneasiness I reflected on that older and stranger race who were said to have held the hilltops. The Picts, the Picti--what in the name of goodness were they? They had troubled me in all my studies, a sort of blankwall to put an end to speculation. We know nothing of them save certain strange names which men called Pictish, the names of those hills in front of me--the Muneraw, the Yirnie, the Calmarton. They were the corpus

vile for learned experiment; but Heaven alone knew what dark abyss of savagery once yawned in the midst of this desert.

Although Buchan does not carry this device to the fantastic extremes that Lovecraft does the device seems still the same.

Then there is the motif of terrible forgotten books on eldritch lore. While searching for clues to the rumors and hints of a forgotten people still lurking in the foothills, a pupil of Buchan's hero produces

a large leather-bound book. It was lettered, in the rococo style of a young man's taste, "Glimpses of the Unknown," and some of the said glimpses he proceeded to impart to me. It was not pleasant reading indeed, I had rarely heard anything so well fitted to shatter sensitive nerves. The early part consisted of folk-tales . . . some of them wholly obscure, some of them with a glint of meaning, but all of them with some hint of a mystery in the hills. . . . But the second part was the stranger for it was made up of actual tales, most of them with date and place appended. It was a most Bedlamite catalogue of horrors, which, if true, made the wholesome moors a place instinct with tragedy.

Again this device seems in principle the same as the Necronomicon. Buchan buttresses some of his legends with footnotes (much in the manner of Lovecraft's referring to the Miskatonic Institute in Arkham) but I am unable to state whether or not these are factual references.

The unspeakable horror? Transpose this quotation into New England dialect and see how familiar it becomes:

"What do ye ken about it?" he cried. "You that bides in a southern toun, what can ye ken o' the God that works in thae hills and the Devil--ay, the manifold devils --that He suffers to bide here? I tell ye, man, that if ye had seen what I have seen ye wad be on your knees at this moment praying to God to pardon your unbelief. There are devils at the back o' every stane and hidin' in every cleuch, and it's by the grace o' God alone that a man is alive upon the earth."

. . . swimming in that black bog pursued by those nameless things, I seemed to be in a world of horror far removed from the kindly world of men.

The shepherd's fear came back on me like a thunderclap. For one awful instant my legs failed me, and I had almost fallen. The next I had turned and ran shrieking up the hill.

"No Man's Land" tells of a man who believes the legends he hears about old Scotland, who verifies them through a book hinting at the survival of an older race that is a constant menace to present-day mankind. He learns to dread the nameless things which pursue him through lonely glens, and is later captured by and escapes from these ancient survivals in the hills. This is as typical a story as Lovecraft ever produced--except that Buchan wrote it first!

It is quite possible, of course, that the juxtaposition of all these similarities is mere coincidence. But speaking for myself at least, I do not think so. It is my opinion that Lovecraft recognized the potentialities of the combination Buchan had stumbled upon and in later years developed them to achieve his most

successful stories. How close this opinion approximates truth I leave to the judgement of the individual reader.

The Watcher at the Threshold shows Buchan to be an author possessed of forceful narrative gifts too pronounced, in some instances, for his own good. "No Man's Land" is an effective and exciting story, but it is scarcely in the same class as "The Dunwich Horror." Buchan plagues himself with anti-climaxes. Like Lovecraft's, his horror is never as horrible as it should be. Within the space of a few paragraphs Buchan can pick up the thread of action and weave it into whatever mood suits him--and he does so often. But "No Man's Land" is not integrated into a compact unit. Able to do whatever he cared to do at any time he wished, Buchan is too often careless.

Although they have little bearing on the literary comparison that has been this article's prime purpose, a few descriptive words should be said about the other tales in this collection. The title story is similar in theme to Fitz-James O'Brien's classic "What Was It?" or "The Horla" of de Maupassant. It is a tale of a strange invisible form of life--not a ghost--that lives side by side with man and makes its presence felt to the perceptive few. The Scottish background is magnificent in this tale, and the gradual build-up, even if a trifle long, is classically done; the "thing" is neither a hoax nor an illusion, and does its dirty work in the approved fashion.

One of the most fiercely vivid tales of love and horror I have ever read is "The Outgoing of the Tide." Here Buchan lashes his talents and produces word-effects the like of which have rarely been matched. Against an atmospheric background of old Scotland we are told of a lad and a lass, and of his urging her to

prove her love by keeping a tryst with him on the Sker. The heavy rain on the night of the tryst, the Sker flood, and the lad's wild ride on a stallion to save his love combine into a mounting crescendo of fierce power. The final horror comes as he braves the surging flood waters to greet the incoming tide, on which floats the body of his beloved, her long yellow hair streaming behind her. The writing in this powerful tale of unrequited love is truly inspired.

"The Far Islands" is the story of a boy grown to manhood and haunted by an ever-present vision of the sea parting to reveal a white path that runs out to distant isles promising fulfillment of his dreams. In the manner of Lovecraft's "Quest of Iranon" we follow the life and travels of this man as each new experience finds him only further from realization of his shining vision, until, like Iranon, his ultimate wish is granted by death.

In "Basilissa" we discover Buchan in a pleasant but pale imitation of Kipling's superbly beautiful "Brushwood Boy." This tells of a boy who dreams of a room in which something of utmost significance to him will occur. This dream recurs with greater frequency and clarity as he grows older, until in Egypt he saves a girl from a powerful tribesman in the room he dreamed of; as he carries her away she reveals to him that she, too, has experienced the same vision from the earliest age.

All in all, John Buchan's Watcher at the Threshold is to be considered a banner book that can be recommended to connoisseurs and selective collectors of the unusual alike. Though at times his plots are imitative, in authoritative background and in the surging might of his rhetoric Buchan stands alone.

ADDENDA

The edition of The Watcher at the Threshold used as the basis for the foregoing article was the George H. Doran printing in the United States of 1918. This contained more stories (and one deletion of a non-fantasy) than the first British edition published in 1902. The fantasies discussed in the book, including "No Man's Land" were published in Blackwood's Magazine (United Kingdom) between 1899 and 1901 and written while John Buchan was at Oxford University. In 1966, J. Randolph

Cox, noted for his bibliography on the Nick Carter stories, was doing some research work on John Buchan (which eventually appeared in English Literature in Transition, Volume 9, Nos. 5 and 6) and searched out a copy of the above article in Fantasy Commentator. He wrote me November 21, 1966: "I just finished writing an article on Buchan's use of the supernatural and my findings parallel many of yours. Didn't even see your article until after I had finished . . . No Man's Land based on an actual legend in Buchan's home county, according to Lady Tweedsmuir in a letter to me."

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS
(continued from page 33)

Such Things Be?, whose original edition (1893) did not contain them, hence could not have been the volume which influenced Chambers. Since, however, it is these later editions which have subsequently been reprinted, the two tales can now be found in modern editions of Can Such Things Be? (e.g., Citadel Press, 1974).

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ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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Comments on Robert M. Price's "Brian Lumley - Reanimator"

By Brian Lumley

About your article:

You find Yibb-Tstll's anus oddly located . . . God knows what you'd say if I told you about Yogg-So-thothe's! His boy Wilbur's is bad enough, but Ol' Yoggie's boggy's globular! See, Bob, most of these critturs are "teratologically fabuloous." If you doubt it take a look at Wilbur's brother (and I'll lend you a pinch of Ibn Ghazi's powder to do it!). But hell, we don't have to go to Arkham or Yuggoth to find examples of weird life forms. Did you see the recent episode of David Attenborough's "Living Planet" (a follow-up to "Life on Earth") about the giant submarine worms living at the edge of volcanic rifts in the sea floor, and existing by eating bacteria through their skin, said bacteria being the product of chemical reactions between hot lava and sea water? Ten feet long, eyeless, featureless, having no mouths and no excretory organs at all! Shades of Shudde-M'ell! But . . . I won't prolong the argument; you're entitled to your opinion; and you probably know your asses better than me. (At the same time and for the same reason, I won't bow to you either. . . .)

I do take you to task, however, when you liken my "House of the Temple" to HPL's "Rats in the Walls." It's very flattering, to be sure, but hardly accurate. And incidentally, no one is more aware of my debt to HPL than I am. I am pretty sure that Robert Bloch, F. B. Long, Derleth (if he were still around; and if he were, wouldn't a hell of a lot of

coprophagites be up to their necks in crocodiles now?), Ray Bradbury, Kuttner, King, etc., etc., etc., would say the same. Me, I'd rather stand in literary debt than fall in utter bankruptcy.

Anyway, about the two stories: the only real connection is that the two "heroes" return to England (Scotland) from abroad to claim an inheritance. Any other resemblance is, to my mind, minimal. As to "The Shunned House": again I am flattered, and can only assume you refer to the hypnotic stupor which forbids action on the part of the protagonists as the horror approaches? And does that mean that HPL owes a "debt" to Bram Stoker? Most of old Drac's victims were in precisely the same hole, weren't they? Actually, "House of the Temple" was very spontaneous and literally wrote itself, as did "Born of the Wind," "Haggopian," and several others. Of the rest of your conjecturing with regard to my "debt": none of the stories you mention consciously inspired the tales to which you connect them. Sorry. (Except, I grant you this, "In the Vaults Beneath" and Mountains of Madness.) "The Thing From the Blasted Heath" was simply a "horror-plant" story, but I gave it a HPLish trimming with the "blasted heath" etc., mainly to grab Derleth's attention. Inclusion of such a story in an Arkham book of "pastiches" seemed to make good sense to me.

But about "Vaults": you take exception to "shoggoth tissue" not only as a concept in itself but more espe-

cially as a lighting system. But the star-headed Old Ones were masters of protoplasmic and genetic engineering; yes, and shoggoths were merely cellular or biological "engines" used as we use bulldozers and hoists. They were bred in different strains to perform different tasks. They were a wonderful workhorse--as is electricity! Steam engines and generators they might or might not have, but the Old Ones did have shoggoths for sure! Certain "scholars" out there have to learn to read their Lovecraft, if not their Lumley, much more carefully. Try looking in At the Mountains of Madness, Chapter VIII, two-thirds through. "The Old Ones had . . . shoggoth tissue from which to breed stone-lifters and subsequent beasts of burden for the cavern city, and other protoplasmic matter to mold into phosphorescent organisms for lighting purposes." (Lovecraft's big words, my little italics, your clanger.)

See, you're allowed to have a little giggle at me--but not at HPL, for God's sake!!! Good grief--they have your goodies for that sort of thing! Unutterable abomination . . . ch-ch . . . uttermost blasphemy! Rather reminds me of the (doubtless blushing even now) guy who wrote me hysterically over my "impossibly titled" and "laughable" Liber Miraculorem of Herbert of Clairvaux (12th century) and Von Gerner's Fischbuch "(!)"--without first taking time to discover that they are in fact genuine works! Ho-hum . . . Someone else found my description of Hadrian's Wall funny and had a giggle at something I said about the old fortifications along its length. Again, I was born within spitting distance of the wall; as a kid I tramped every bloody mile of it!

But . . . you made a similar mistake way back in Vol. 2, No. 1, (understandable, for again your research

was shallow and your sources dated; or, maybe time was against you and you needed a quick filler?) where because you could discover nothing fishy about Dagon in his Phillistine period you assumed Lovecraft mistaken in his depiction of Dagon as a classic merman, half-fish, half-man. Well, book sources are useful, certainly, but contemporary artifacts have to be better. Likenesses of Dagon--half-fish, half-man, as in HPL--may be viewed on Phillistine coins (more properly medallions or jewelry) of the period. I saw one such "coin" in a museum when I was a squid (er, kid) since which I've come across them in photographs and drawings. Incidentally, (and not unnaturally) the temple to Dagon which Samson toppled was at Gaza. Of course it was: where else would you build a temple to a fish-god but on the coast, overlooking the sea? And with respect--'cos I know you're a biblical sort of chappy--you put entirely the wrong interpretation on I Samuel 5:4. The verse reads thus:

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

Kitto makes a point of "the stump" as being "the fishy part." Let's assume he was misled by tradition. Let's even for "stump" read "trunk" as you have it. Now, the scribe has no difficulty using such words as "face" and "palms" and "hands," so why does he use trunk or stump? Quite simply because he couldn't use "body," and he most certainly couldn't use "legs"! See, in the old Hebrew there's a word for man-body but no word for fish-body; hence

"stump" in that instance; or, if you must, "trunk." (Though in fact the original text said "only the fish-part of Dagon was left to him.")

Further to that, verse 6 also mentions an item of interest; it can be seen that Ashdod, too, was coastal, ideally suited to temples of Dagon, etc. . . . Later, (historically) when the Phoenicians took up Dagon, calling him Oannes or some such and putting the new name on their coins, they too showed him pictorially--as in HPL and as in Phillistine times--in a decidedly fishy light!

I researched all such when I was writing "Haggopian," not deeply, sufficient to satisfy that it wouldn't go against the grain to set the tale in the Mediterranean. So there you go; frankly, I prefer the "embarrassments" (!) of "shoggoth tissue"--lifted directly from HPL--to the "embarrassments" of erroneous information based on inadequate research. So when in your article concerning my work you say, "it takes no great detective skill," etc., I reckon you just about say it all . . .

And how can you sneer at Titus Crow owning a copy of the Cthaat Aquadingen? That's like saying Forry Ackerman shouldn't own a complete set of Famous Monsters, isn't it? I mean, who else would have a copy if not Crow? In "Billy's Oak," (where Crow was introduced) the narrator goes to see him because he has a copy! After that . . . he should lose it or something? Worse still, you say Crow has a Necronomicon. Hey, are you sure it's me you've been reading, Bob? Titus Crow owned a copy of the Necronomicon? I'd better tell him at once; it'll save him so much time down at the British Museum! Feery's Notes he has, yes, but not the Al Azif in any shape or form. (See, it's rare. My own copy cost all of \$6. 50 from Bob Weinberg, and it's only the Dee; and it's a poor

photocopy!)

Now, I won't accuse you of neglecting your homework on this occasion, because here I can see that you're only making a point in your own right; but let's be honest about it, the point you make seems almost deliberately designed to bring me down to the status of the most amateur amateur Cthulhu freak. For even he (whoever he is) will probably respect the rarity of the item in question; which here you make it appear that I don't! Yes, your reader is liable to think, "Oh, yeah--one of those stories again," because you unjustly caused him to do so!

Do me a favour: list the nine stories in which Wendy-Smith's demise is rhapsodized. I'm not saying you're wrong, just that you surprise me. I thought it had been rhapsodized in only three or four stories. (Five?) (Six?) OK--I give in--I'll never rhapsodize, eulogize or italicize it again . . .

Anyaow, as they might have it in Dunwich, I'm not thoroughly displeased with what you say of my work, be it stories, novels, or both. (Though I have to say your rendering of Beneath the Moors was a bit strong; I personally like that one as much as anything I was doing in those days; and most readers, if they're not just snowing me, would seem to agree.) Indeed I would in most cases go along with your over-all appraisal. Personally I would say, as others have said, that Transition is the weakest: it was strong but had to lose many thousands of words before publication, and I admit I used an axe instead of a scalpel. Time didn't permit of fine trimming. So, critically, much of your judgment is probably soundly based; and it would have been even better if you'd checked your work a little more diligently. Perhaps once again, like me with Transition, time was against you.

As for your "mail-caller," Patrice Joubert? -- I'm not much on frog names, excepting Tsathoggua, of course--he can't fool me, not living on the edge of Ithaqua territory like that! Anyway, I'm really sorry he feels that way and consider it only right that I help out in what is obviously a very severe case of Lumleyosis. He HATES me? Lord, I hardly know the guy, I swear! And I stink? Has he been in my sock drawer? (I saw something decidedly squamous in there a couple of weeks ago.) Or maybe he, too, like Yibb-Tstll, is coprocephaloid -- except he has it where his mouth should be.

Anyway, Patrice, having read one of your earlier letters (!) to Crypt, and while feeling that I really shouldn't extract the essence from retard, I've decided to advise you of a cure. All you have to do to avoid me is stay out of Crouch End and give up reading Weirdbook, Fantasy Book, Whispers, Etchings & Odysseys, old DAW paperbacks and in-print Arkhams with my name on 'em, old Joves and Berkleys similarly inscribed, several German, French, Japanese and British hard- and pa-

perbacks likewise embellished, including a new trilogy from Grenada, and, of course, Crypt.

An even better way (and to my mind much more satisfactory and permanent) would be to go scuba-diving with a leaky tank off Devil's Reef mumbling an invocation to Dagon!

Teratologically--

(Sgd.) Brian Lumley

Wendy-Smith's demise is rhapsodized in:

"In the Vaults Beneath"
 "The Sister City"
 "The Caller of the Black"
 "The Horror at Oakdeane"
 "Born of the Winds"
 "Cement Surroundings"
 "Rising with Surtsey"
Beneath the Moors
 "The Fairground Horror"
 "House of the Temple"

Reuterdahl, Relativity and the "Aimless Waves"

By Richard L. Tierney

Did Einstein know too much? Historians of science have often puzzled over the fact that Einstein, in developing his theory of special relativity, appeared to rely mostly on his intuition and very little on the work of his predecessors. It is well known that Einstein often referred to God as the "Old One" and to his own work as an attempt to discover the "secrets of the Old One." The conventional-minded have seen in this only an indication of the great physicist's sense of poetry and humor, but we who are students of the Cthulhu Mythos, knowing the sort of horrors that probes of the universe have heretofore stumbled upon, may well wonder. How much of these dark matters did Einstein really suspect?

Professor Arvid Reuterdahl of St. Paul, who spent many years trying to refute Einstein's relativity theory, might have known--but he died under puzzling circumstances on January 13, 1933. H. P. Lovecraft would have been interested in those circumstances and may even have read of them. According to the Minneapolis Journal of January 14, Professor Reuterdahl dropped dead at the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Sixth Street in downtown Minneapolis while admiring "some object in an art store window." The paper went on to state that he had organized the International Theistic Society "to prove the existence of God by scientific means," had done an oil painting of mystical Masonic significance and had investigated spiritualist phenomena.

Though no Lascars or nautical-

looking Negroes were reported near Reuterdahl at the time, one cannot help but compare his demise with the mysterious deaths of Professor George Gammell Angell and Second Mate Gustaf Johansen in Lovecraft's tale "The Call of Cthulhu." When one realizes that Reuterdahl was heavily into the study of relativity and quantum mechanics as well, one thinks also of the fate of Walter Gilman in "The Dreams in the Witch-House." In short, the real-life Reuterdahl would have made a fine protagonist for a Lovecraftian horror tale.

Not that the Twin Cities professor's death in 1933 could have influenced "The Call of Cthulhu" or "The Dreams in the Witch-House," for Lovecraft wrote these tales in 1926 and 1932 respectively. Yet it is just possible that Reuterdahl may have met and influenced the young Lovecraft in Providence, for it was in that city that the professor studied physics and eventually became a mathematics instructor at Brown University.

Arvid Reuterdahl was born at Karlstad, Sweden, on February 15, 1876, and came to the United States with his parents in 1882. His father, Jonas, was a naval officer and mathematician; his mother Christina's maiden name, coincidentally, was Johanson. Despite some lack of early formal training Arvid did well at Brown University and received his Bachelor of Science there in 1897, then his Master's in 1899, and finally taught mathematics at that institution for several years. Lovecraft

would have been in his teens much of that time and, considering his precocious interest in astronomy and his frequent visits to the university observatory and library, the two could well have met.

Then in 1905--the year Einstein published his Special Theory of Relativity--Arvid Reuterdahl departed and took an engineering position in Spokane, Washington, a city nearly as far from Providence as one can get in the 48 States and still not be near any seacoast. He stayed there for about a decade, then held a position at Kansas City Polytechnic Institute until finally, in 1918, he became dean of architecture and engineering at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

It was in the next year, on May 29, that two British expeditions performed experiments during a solar eclipse to measure the bending of starlight passing close to the sun. These famous experiments established that light bends in a gravitational field in accordance with the predictions of relativity theory. Most people do not realize, however, that the star field in which the eclipse took place was the Hyades--a sinister fact indeed in light of the Lovecraftian revelation. I wonder if the world has been told the full details of these "experiments"!

The media made much of this confirmation of relativity. Then about eight and a half months later, Professor Arvid Reuterdahl aired his views on the matter in an interview for the St. Paul Pioneer Press. The edition of Sunday, February 15, 1920, burst forth with a long article headlined: AUTHORSHIP OF THE FAMOUS THEORY OF BENDING LIGHT CONTESTED BY ST. PAUL SCIENTIST; LOST PAPER IS KEY. Evidently Reuterdahl, who had kept silent until now, had decided for whatever reasons that it was time to

counter the ever-increasing publicity about relativity.

Reuterdahl claimed in this and a subsequent article ("Getting Ahead of Einstein," Minneapolis Journal, October 24, 1920) that his own work had anticipated much of relativity theory. He pointed out that his April 1902 paper "The Atom of Electrochemistry," published (while he still lived in Providence) in the Transactions of the American Electrochemical Society, had predicted the absence of a cosmic ether. His "lost paper," titled "Space-Time Potential: A New Concept of Gravitation and Electricity," copyrighted February 19, 1915, had been sent for perusal to Professor Mittag-Leffler, a Stockholm mathematician; it contained, said Reuterdahl, material which Einstein could have used to develop relativity theory. Postal records showed that it was subsequently "in the hands of a German professor." Late that year Einstein had announced to a correspondent that he had made a "breakthrough" and in early 1916 he published his General Theory of Relativity.

The scientific world paid little attention to Reuterdahl. Then, in April of 1921, Einstein visited the United States. His main purpose was to help drum up support for Zionism, but the newspapers were more interested in pumping him on relativity. Reuterdahl responded immediately with a series of interviews in the Minneapolis Tribune (April 10, 16, 18, 19, and 24) in which he repeated the implication that Einstein had plagiarized his "lost paper." However, a new debunking note enters, Reuterdahl now contending that relativity is grounded on "fallacious assumptions." Was the St. Paul savant's desire for recognition--perhaps triggered by Einstein's fame--now at odds with the caution that had kept him silent for so many years?

Once again the public controversy, though bitter enough, evoked little response from scientists, who perhaps thought Reuterdahl a crank with a dash of anti-Semitism thrown in. The dust gradually settled and the St. Paul professor faded into obscurity, though he continued to work on his theories. His "Space-Time Potential" article had already been found, recovered, altered and worked up into a book which was published in 1920 under the title Scientific Theism Versus Materialism. This would be followed in 1928 by a second book, The God of Science, but in the meantime Reuterdahl also started, in 1922, a periodical called The Theistic Monthly. All these publications were devoted to his Theory of Interdependence, which maintained that all things are interconnected in the mind of an Absolute Principle (God), and which thereby did away with the need for a mechanistic "cosmic ether." A "Theocosmic Diagram" facing the title page of The God of Science shows in elaborate detail how the universe is so sustained.

Yet in all these writings Reuterdahl is careful to insist that "Einsteinism" is a farfetched theory unworthy of consideration. Why this change of heart, after apparently at first wanting to take credit for much of relativity? Had the professor decided that his earlier reticence, despite his desire for due recognition, was justified? Had the fate of Professor Angell in Providence perhaps given him pause?

And had he, in his last years, corresponded with Walter Gilman in Arkham, who was finding such dark implications in the study of quantum physics and Riemannian equations? For Reuterdahl, too, had studied much in these areas, and in 1923 had been awarded the Doctorate in Science by the Academy of Nations for his work toward finding a "physical

meaning" of Planck's constant. In this area alone he seems to have agreed with Einstein, who maintained to the end that Heisenberg's uncertainty principle could not be an ultimate law of the universe and that causal "hidden variables" in subatomic events would eventually be found to prove it. Seems to have agreed with Einstein, I say, for here again Reuterdahl may have been covering up. Did he feel that scientists were learning too much?

If so, then alas for Reuterdahl! -- for relativity has proven out in experiment after experiment since his day. So has quantum mechanics, and the "uncertainty principle" now stands as one of the few certainties. Recent work suggests that space-time may be like a lattice, with "lumps" of space at the intersections, and that matter within a collapsing star might wind up "among the points of the lattice, inside space-time" (Science Digest, May 1982, p. 32). One recalls Alhazred on the Old Ones: "Not in the spaces we know, but between them, they walk serene and primal, undimensioned and to us unseen." Then, only last year, came proof of ultimate uncertainty in the form of two experiments performed in Paris (near the Rue d'Auseil?) showing beyond doubt that there can be no causal "hidden variables" behind the randomness of subatomic phenomena (see Science, September 23, 1983, p. 1251). Relativity had already shown our universe to be "unimaginable" by human minds and now quantum mechanics has shown it to be ultimately due to unpredictable events that can be described only by the mathematics of chance.

Schroedinger had in 1925 discovered that the orbit of an electron could be described by the same equations as those which describe the resonances of "a drum, a wind in-

strument, or any other acoustical instrument" (Einstein and Infeld: The Evolution of Physics, 1938, p. 303). As Nevil Kingston-Brown has pointed out (Crypt of Cthulhu #4, 1982), it all reminds us of that Being who lurks beyond space-time with

. . . a cracked flute clutched in
a monstrous paw
Whence flow the aimless waves
whose chance combining
Gives each frail cosmos its eter-
nal law.

We might ask: How did Lovecraft, an avowed mechanist-materialist, come to the insight that the universe is somehow sustained by the "aimless waves" produced by the "drums and flutes" of Chance?

And what of Reuterdahl? Did he ever suspect that his Absolute Principle of Interdependence might in reality be the Ultimate Chaos Azathoth? If so, he must have realized that his claim for credit concerning relativity had been unwise. In pointing out, for instance, the curious fact that Einstein cited few predecessors who had aided him toward his unprecedented insights, Reuterdahl may have inadvertently shown Others that he knew too much. Though he tried to cover up by claiming that Einstein had plagiarized from others besides himself--Maxwell, Lorentz and Planck, for instance--scientists knew better. They could see that Einstein's ideas owed little to these predecessors -- and so, perhaps, could Others.

And now, where is modern physics leading us?

Reuterdahl spent his last years studying spiritualism and the mystic Masonic symbolism of the Illuminati. Was he trying to protect himself? If so, did he succeed only until the day he saw that "object" in a Minneapolis

art store? We may never know.

After Professor Arvid Reuterdahl dropped dead (did Einstein's "Old One" draw his soul into the "object"?) his funeral was held in the Scottish Rite Temple of Minneapolis and he was cremated at the elegant Lakewood Cemetery. Lovecraft would surely have appreciated the fact that one of the professor's pall-bearers was a Dr. (T. V.) Moreau and another one Herman Moe (related to Maurice?), both of Minneapolis. But Lovecraft himself would die only four years later.

In view of the foregoing facts--far too striking, surely, to be mere coincidence--I wrote several weeks ago to the distinguished Lovecraftian scholar S. T. Joshi, asking him to find out what he could about Professor Reuterdahl's tenure in Providence. So far I have received no reply. Did Mr. Joshi indeed investigate? If so, I do hope that he has come to no harm because of my request. . . .

But--what is that sound I now hear outside my window, like wet rain-coats flapping in the wind? That scratching at the sill . . . Great Gugs! That glowing, glowering, tow-headed parallellopipedon -- no! Stay away! YAAEEEEEE!

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(continued on page 47)

Robert W. Chambers

By S. T. Joshi

"Chambers is like Rupert Hughes and a few other fallen Titans--equipped with the right brains and education, but wholly out of the habit of using them." Such was H. P. Lovecraft's rather harsh judgment of Robert W. Chambers shortly after discovering him in 1927 (SL III. 148). And if that judgment requires some small qualification, we must nevertheless agree with Frederic Taber Cooper's lugubrious assessment: "So much of Mr. Chambers's work exasperates, because we feel that he might so easily have made it better."¹ The career of Robert W. Chambers --whether we consider only his fantastic writing or his output as a whole --is the sad tale of a man who, starting with a vivid and distinctive imagination and a seemingly natural gift for putting words to paper, discovered popularity too quickly and devoted the rest of his life to catering to popular whim. The best of Chambers' work can almost be measured by its very lack of popularity.

Of Chambers' life we know little. Born in Brooklyn on 26 May 1865, he entered the Art Students' League around the age of 20, where the artist Charles Dana Gibson was his fellow-student. From 1886 to 1893 he studied art in Paris, at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and at Julian's, and his work was displayed at the Salon so early as 1889. Returning to New York, he succeeded in selling his illustrations to Life, Truth, and Vogue ("the three most frivolous and ephemeral publications of any commercial standing that New York has ever known," as John Curtis Underwood² termed it), but for reasons still not entirely clear he turned to writing and produced his first

"novel," In the Quarter (1894), really a series of loosely connected character sketches of artist life in Paris. C. C. Baldwin³ suggested that Chambers was inspired "to make use of his Latin Quarter experiences" by Henri Murger's Scenes de la vie de Boheme (1851; the novel upon which Puccini's La Boheme is based), and this may be right; although there is no way to ascertain whether it was so specific a literary influence as this, since Lovecraft in Supernatural Horror in Literature makes note of Chambers' "somewhat trivial and affected cultivation of the Gallic studio atmosphere made popular by Du Maurier's Trilby." That Chambers was not, in any case, sincerely interested in capturing his own experiences is testified by the fact that he completely dropped the "Gallic studio atmosphere" after The Mystery of Choice (1897), presumably because it no longer proved popular. With The King in Yellow (1895) Chambers' career as a writer was established--not because he had felt himself a born writer but because that collection of short stories was successful (probably in spite of rather than because of the horror tales contained in it). Chambers had somehow caught the public eye; he knew what the public wanted and gave it to them. Although from time to time he returned to fantasy, he never did so with the gripping and almost nightmarish intensity of The King in Yellow; nor did he ever again attempt a sincere and almost scathing depiction of the hollowness of American social and intellectual life as he did in the unsuccessful novel Outsiders (1898), which alone of his works may be of interest to the social historian.

Instead, he wrote novels and tales which, while superficially dealing with a wide range of topics--the Franco-Prussian War, the American Revolution, modern New York society, World War I, the Civil War--all contained an unending procession of pompous and dim-witted fellows (usually of independent means and attemptedly cynical temperament) all falling in love at the least provocation with an equally endless parade of simpering and virtuous women who, although capable of blushing instantly at the slightest suggestion of impropriety, nevertheless give themselves body and soul to their male pursuers after what proves to be a merely token resistance. Some passages in Chambers' works would probably have been considered salacious at the time of their writing, and the only fitting modern parallels are the Harlequin Romances of today. It is doubtful whether any of Chambers' work would serve even as raw material for historical or sociological analysis of the period, since even in his own day Chambers was castigated for producing wooden and unrealistic characters; of his females in particular F. T. Cooper remarked: "They are all of them what men like to think women to be, rather than the actual women themselves." It is not, then, surprising that nearly the whole of Chambers' output--of which I have counted eighty-seven different volumes, including novels, tales, one volume of poems, one drama, juvenile books on nature, and even an opera libretto--has lapsed into obscurity and has even yet to be resurrected by industrious academics always on the lookout for new dissertation topics.

There is not much to tell of Chambers' later life. At least two of his novels reached official best-seller status--The Fighting Chance (1906)

and The Younger Set (1907), both selling some 200,000 copies--and Chambers settled into a luxurious and elegantly furnished mansion in Broadalbin, in upstate New York. Like Lord Dunsany, Chambers liked the "Great Outdoors," and was an ardent hunter and fisherman. He collected butterflies, Oriental rugs and vases, and--if the photograph of his study printed in Rupert Hughes' laudatory sketch of Chambers in Cosmopolitan is any guide⁴--he was in no small way a bibliophile. He died, presumably in comfort and peace, on 16 December 1933.

Of the pleasantness of Chambers' character there seems no doubt: Hughes unhesitatingly said that "Bob Chambers is the salt of the earth," and Joyce Kilmer's interview with him in 1917⁵ reveals him to be genial, completely lacking in the arrogance of success, and even fairly perceptive about writing and writers; his concluding advice to the would-be author ("Let him not take himself too seriously!") is surely a reference to himself. It is, however, ironic that Chambers' very popularity drove each of his works into obscurity as its successor emerged; and so early as 1927 August Derleth complained in a letter to H. P. Lovecraft⁶ that The King in Yellow--the most widely reprinted of Chambers' works both during and after his lifetime--was becoming difficult of access.

Chambers' fantastic writing is limited principally to four volumes--The King in Yellow (1895), The Mystery of Choice (1897), In Search of the Unknown (1904), and The Slayer of Souls (1920)--while several ancillary volumes contain weird matter in lesser degrees--The Maker of Moons (1896), The Tracer of Lost Persons (1906), The Tree of Heaven (1907), and Police!!! (1915). This wide scattering of his fantastic writing shows that Chambers never con-

sidered himself a fantaisiste in the tradition of Poe and Bierce (although he was influenced by both), but seems to have written fantasy whenever the mood struck him. It is, of course, to be noted that three of the eight works listed date to Chambers' very early period; and subsequent generations of fantasy readers have confirmed C. C. Baldwin's remark on Chambers' output: "Had I my choice I'd take the first three or four [of his books] and let the rest go hang."⁷

The inspiration for The King in Yellow--a collection of short stories of which only the first five are fantastic, and of these the first four are loosely interrelated--is, however, tolerably obvious. Chambers must have read Ambrose Bierce's collection Tales of Soldiers and Civilians (1891--or the English edition of 1892, In the Midst of Life)⁸ shortly after his return to America from France, for he adopts certain cryptic allusions and names coined in some of Bierce's tales and appropriates them for his own. The focus of these first four tales in The King in Yellow is a mysterious drama (probably in two acts) called The King in Yellow, which incites a peculiar fear and desperation upon reading. Chambers' descriptions of this odd volume may rank as some of his finest moments:

This is the thing that troubles me, for I cannot forget Carcosa where black stars hang in the heavens; where the shadows of men's thoughts lengthen in the afternoon, when the twin suns sink into the Lake of Hali; and my mind will bear forever the memory of the Pallid Mask. I pray God will curse the writer, as the writer has cursed the world with this beautiful, stupendous creation, terrible in its simplicity, irresistible in its truth--a world which now trembles before the King in Yel-

low. ("The Repairer of Reputations")

It has, however, not been generally noticed that Chambers has apparently wilfully altered the components he derived from Bierce, and it is in any case not clear whether the Bierce influence really extends beyond these borrowed names. Bierce indeed created Carcosa, which he describes in "An Inhabitant of Carcosa" as some great city of the distant past. Chambers maintains this notion, but in Bierce Hali was simply a prophet who is "quoted" in the epigraphs for the tales "The Death of Halpin Frayser" and "An Inhabitant of Carcosa." Finally, Chambers borrows the term "Hastur" from Bierce; but whereas Bierce imagined Hastur as a god of the shepherds (see "Haita the Shepherd"), Chambers regards Hastur as a place. In "The Repairer of Reputations" Chambers creates another mythical book, The Imperial Dynasty of America (it is never again used in later works), and cites the beginning of it: "When from Carcosa, the Hyades, Hastur, and Aldebaran. . . ." This itself seems to be derived from a sentence in Bierce's "Inhabitant of Carcosa": "I saw through a sudden rift in the clouds Aldebaran and the Hyades!" I shall give Chambers the benefit of the doubt and assume that his alterations of the data taken from Bierce are intentional. (It is to be noted that Lovecraft, when mentioning such things as Carcosa, the Lake of Hali, and the like in his own tales, was consciously following Chambers, although he knew full well the Biercian origin of these terms.)

From the first four stories in The King in Yellow we learn a few more details about the contents of Chambers' mythical play: we know of three characters, Cassilda, Camilla, and the King in Yellow himself; aside

from places such as Hastur and the Lake of Hali, we learn of regions called Demhe, Yhtill, and Alar (the last also from Bierce); finally, there are other details such as the Pallid Mask and the Yellow Sign. It is very obvious that Chambers intended to leave these citations vague and unexplained; he wished merely to provide dim hints as to the possible worlds of horror and awe to which his mythical book was a guide. Although in "The Silent Land" (in The Maker of Moons) Chambers twice makes mention of a "King in Carcosa," he never develops this "King in Yellow mythology" elsewhere.

The tales in The King in Yellow differ widely in tone, flavor, and quality. The first, "The Repairer of Reputations," is a bizarre tale of the future (its setting is New York in 1920) in which Chambers, aside from accurately predicting a general European war, imagines a quasi-utopia with euthanasia chambers for those who wish to slough off the burden of existence, envisions Chicago and New York rising "white and imperial" in a new age of architecture wherein the "horrors" of Victorian design are repudiated, and things of this sort. For all that the tale cannot be called science-fiction (on which see further below), since the futuristic setting does not in the end have any role in the story line, which concerns a demented young man who imagines that he is the King in Yellow and that his cousin is vying for the throne. Such a bald description cannot begin to convey the other-worldly, nightmarish quality of the tale, where the unexplained elements of Chambers' "King in Yellow mythology," along with a prose style bordering upon the extravagant and an intentionally chaotic exposition, create an atmosphere of chilling horror.

"The Mask," in contrast, is an

exquisitely beautiful tale set in France concerning a sculptor who has discovered a fluid capable of petrifying any plant or animal such that it resembles the finest marble. When the artist's wife Genevieve commits suicide by falling into a pool of this substance, the sculptor kills himself; but the sculptor's friend, returning some time later to the scene, finds that some flowers and a rabbit that the artist had petrified have miraculously returned to life --it appears that the fluid's effect is not permanent. The artist's friend enters the room where Genevieve lies: "The door flew open, the sunlight streamed into my face, and through it, in a heavenly glory, the Madonna smiled, as Genevieve lifted her flushed face from her marble couch, and opened her sleepy eyes." This is pure poetry, and if Chambers had had the discipline to write more often like this, then his work would not have attained the universal oblivion it so richly deserves.

"The Yellow Sign" is generally considered to be the best tale in The King in Yellow, and deals horrifyingly with the nameless fate of an artist who has found the Yellow Sign. Lovecraft in Supernatural Horror in Literature has well described the loathsome hearse-driver who is a harbinger for the narrator's death--a soft, pudgy, worm-like creature who has one of his fingers torn off in a tussle and who, when found in the artist's studio at the end, is pronounced to have been dead for months. Finally, "The Demoiselle d'Ys" (although it has a minor character named Hastur, for no apparent reason) is not part of the "King in Yellow mythology," but is another hauntingly beautiful tale about a man who is supernaturally transplanted into the mediaeval age while hunting in the Breton countryside and falls in love with a lovely huntress three

centuries dead. The rest of The King in Yellow is non-fantastic, although it contains a series of fine prose-poems ("The Prophets' Paradise") and a vivid and gripping tale of the Siege of Paris ("The Street of the First Shell").

The Mystery of Choice (1897) is an undeservedly forgotten collection, and--in its more refined and controlled prose style, greater unity of theme, and exquisite pathos--may well be a generally better work than The King in Yellow. The first five stories are linked by a common setting--Brittany--and some recurring characters; and although the first ("The Purple Emperor") is a rather amusing parody on the detective story, the rest of the collection contains fine tales of fantasy and even science-fiction. Here again Chambers can, when he chooses, create moments of heart-rending exquisiteness, and his powers of description are unexcelled:

Then the daily repeated miracle of the coming of dawn was wrought before our eyes. The heavens glowed in rainbow tints; the shredded mist rising along the river

was touched with purple and gold, and acres of meadow and pasture dripped precious stones. Shreds of the fading night-mist drifted among the tree tops, now tipped with fire, while in the forest depths faint sparkles came from some lost ray of morning light falling on wet leaves. Then of a sudden upshot the sun, and against it, black and gigantic, a peasant towered, leaning upon his spade. ("The White Shadow")

This is the art not only of the painter but of the etcher or engraver, and holds us breathless while it lasts; but it all too frequently does not last long.

In Search of the Unknown (1904) reveals a disastrous falling off of quality, and shows that while Chambers' conceptions are as fertile as ever (we are here concerned with a series of tales depicting successive searches for lost species of animals, including a loathsome half-man and half-amphibian called "the harbor-master," a group of invisible creatures apparently in the shape of beautiful women, and the like), they are marred by a mechanical and ad-

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ventitious love-element which in its flippancy and pseudo-sophistication nearly destroys all the horror which Chambers can so easily create. In every tale the narrator tries to flirt with a pretty girl but ultimately loses her at the last moment to some rival. Chambers oddly chose to reprint "A Matter of Interest" (from The Mystery of Choice) in this volume; a work which, though labeled a novel, is in fact a string of tales (actually published separately in journals) very bunglingly stitched together into a continuous narrative. Indeed, so many of Chambers' "novels" are of this sort that few can be termed other than episodic. A pseudo-sequel to this volume is Police!!! (1915), a collection of tales where further searches are made into lost species --including mammoths in the glaciers of Canada, a group of "cavelladies" in the Everglades, and the like. This book is even further injured by frivolity than its predecessor (although, in justice to Chambers, several of the tales are intentionally parodic and actually quite amusing), and also shows a decline in the fertility of invention which alone lends some merit to Chambers' work: the amphibian man in "The Third Eye" too closely resembles the harbor-master, while in "Un Peud'Amour" we encounter an irascible character very obviously reminiscent of a similar character in the first segment of In Search of the Unknown. But even here there are some gripping moments: "Un Peud'Amour" presents some horrifying glimpses of a gigantic worm burrowing beneath the fields of upstate New York, while a previous tale ("The Ladies of the Lake") discloses a school of huge winnows the size of Pullman cars.

With The Slayer of Souls (1920)--a novel which has gained inexplicable popularity amongst modern aficiona-

does of fantasy--Chambers reaches the nadir of his career. Even if we could swallow the appallingly tasteless premise--that "Anarchists, terrorists, Bolsheviks, Reds of all shades and degrees, are now believed to represent in modern times" the descendants of the devil-worshipping Yezidi sect of inner Asia, which is poisoning the minds of misguided leftists and labor unionists (the IWW is specifically mentioned) for the overthrow of good and the establishment of evil, whatever that means--there is no escaping the tedium of the whole work, which is concerned with the efforts of the U. S. Secret Service, along with a young girl who, although having lived for years with these evil Chinese, has now defected and converted to Christianity, to hunt down the eight leading figures of the sect and exterminate them. They succeed in their task with mechanical regularity, and it is no surprise that civilization is saved in the end for God-fearing Americans. The novel --an elaboration of the title story of The Maker of Moons (1896), although that tale is handled far better and contains some delicate moments of shimmering fantasy--is further crippled by a ponderous and entirely humorless style, and with characters so moronic that they cannot reconcile themselves to the supernatural even after repeated exposure to it. And the crowning absurdity is that the origin of all these evils is a "black planet . . . not a hundred miles" from the earth! There is not a single redeeming element in this novel.

The Tree of Heaven (1907), although not exclusively fantastic, actually contains some very fine moments. The construction of the "novel" is ingenious: at the outset an odd mystic utters prophecies to a group of his friends, and the subsequent episodes are concerned with their

fulfillment. For once the love-element is not extrinsic to the plot, and in several of these tales love is simply given a supernatural dimension which creates a profundity not often found in Chambers; even the non-fantastic romantic tales are handled with a seriousness and depth completely absent in other of Chambers' works. The superb atmosphere of delicate pathos and dream-fantasy maintained in some of these tales may place this volume only behind The King in Yellow and The Mystery of Choice as Chambers' finest.

Some general remarks can now be made on Chambers' fantastic work. One of its most interesting features is a proto-science-fictional element which emerges in some works cheek-by-jowl with the overt supernaturalism of other tales--a supernaturalism which finds greatest expression in the incoherent series of fantastic episodes in The Slayer of Souls. We have seen that "The Repairer of Reputations" is set in the future, but "The Mask" actually makes greater use of a science-fictional principle of great importance: the scientific justification for a fantastic event. Chambers never precisely explains the nature of the petrifying fluid used in the story, but we are led to believe that it would not be beyond the bounds of chemistry to encompass it. Similarly, in "A Matter of Interest" elaborate attempts are made at the outset to establish the veracity and accuracy of the narrative, which concerns the discovery of the last living dinosaur (the "thermosaurus"). In Search of the Unknown is even more emphatic on the point, and one of the characters vigorously denies the supernatural character of the harbor-master: "I don't think that the harbor-master is a spirit or a sprite or a hobgoblin, or any sort of damned rot. Neither do I believe it to be an opti-

cal illusion'" (p. 26, 1904 ed.). Less scientific justification is presented for the creatures in Police!!!, but even here few strain credulity beyond the breaking-point. Even The Slayer of Souls enunciates the principle: "'We're up against something absolutely new. Of course, it isn't magic. It can, of course, be explained by natural laws about which we happen to know nothing at present'" (pp. 173-74, 1920 ed.); unfortunately, in this case little effort is made to coordinate the bizarre events into a plausibly scientific framework.

The detective element in Chambers emerges in such parodies as "The Purple Emperor" and "The Eggs of the Silver Moon" (in Police!!!), but most concentratedly in the episodic novel The Tracer of Lost Persons. The central character is an enigmatic and seemingly omniscient figure who presents himself much in the mold of Sherlock Holmes; although perhaps the parallel to Poe's C. Auguste Dupin would be closer, since one segment of the novel involves the decoding of an ingenious cipher derived very obviously from "The Gold Bug." This novel in addition contains a magnificently haunting tale involving the revival of an ancient Egyptian girl suspended in a state of hypnosis for thousands of years, and reveals the same aura of fin-de-siecle beauty that makes The Mystery of Choice so exquisite.

Finally, we have had frequent occasion to remark upon interrelations between Chambers' tales. Many of the short-story collections use the same characters and setting, and are not much different from his episodic novels. Interrelations between entire works exist: The King in Yellow derives some of its characters from In the Quarter; some characters in In Search of the Unknown return in Police!!!; in The Tree of

Heaven there is passing allusion to the central character of The Tracer of Lost Persons. Much of this seems to have been done in a spirit of fun, and need imply no serious thematic connection.

Chambers' influence on subsequent fantasy writing is difficult to judge; several leading fantaisistes of the next generation--Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, A. Merritt--professed to have been impressed with Chambers (especially--and almost exclusively--The King in Yellow), but in Lovecraft's case at any rate the influence does not seem to extend much beyond the borrowing of names from Chambers' "King in Yellow mythology"; the general "cosmic" attitude of both Lovecraft and Smith was clearly established before they ever encountered the dim adumbration of the same attitude in Chambers. The best of Chambers was a product of the "Yellow Nineties," and gains its power in large part by capturing the languor and pathos of that distinctive period.

Robert W. Chambers is a decidedly frustrating writer--a man for whom writing seems to have come as easily as (on a far higher level) composition seems to have come for Telemann or Mozart. He could draw literary substance from his own experiences: as a painter in France, as a hunter and fisher in New York state, as a collector of butterflies and general dabbler in science--but who marred so many of his creations with flippancy, pseudo-sophistication, and catch-penny sentimentality; whose descriptive and imaginative powers were of a high order but who was too lulled by the favor of the mob to use them consistently and effectively; who has left us some immortal tales of horror and fantasy which must be laboriously sifted out from a plethora of trash appalling in its scope. Chambers was an intel-

lectual dilettante, and wrote whatever came to mind; we are fortunate that he now and again turned his careless and free-flowing pen to the creation of a few weird tales of transcendent beauty and horror.

NOTES

¹Frederic Taber Cooper, "Robert W. Chambers," in Some American Story Tellers (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), p. 81.

²"Robert W. Chambers and Commercialism," in Literature and Insurgency: Ten Studies in Racial Evolution (New York: Michael Kennerley, 1914), pp. 447-80.

³"Robert W. Chambers," in The Men Who Make Our Novels, rev. ed., as by George Gordon (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924), p. 92.

⁴Rupert Hughes, "The Art of Robert W. Chambers," Cosmopolitan, 65 (June 1918), 80-81, 116.

⁵"What Is Genius? Robert W. Chambers," in his Literature in the Making (New York and London: Harper, 1917), pp. 75-85.

⁶See Lovecraft to Derleth, 6 May 1927 and 16 May 1927; MSS State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

⁷Baldwin, op. cit. (note 3), p. 90.

⁸The two stories by Bierce which centrally influenced Chambers--"Haita the Shepherd" and "An Inhabitant of Carcosa"--were originally published in Tales of Soldiers and Civilians, but in later editions (viz. those of 1898 et seq.) were removed and transferred to the collection Can (continued on page 17)

A Weird Tales Filmography

Compiled by William Fulwiler

This filmography attempts to provide major credits for all feature films adapted from stories first published in the magazine Weird Tales (1923-1954). Films are listed alphabetically by U. S. release title. The title of each film is followed by this data in parenthesis: year of release, production company, U. S. releasing company (if different from production company), and running time in minutes. Credits for each film follow in this order: producer(s), director, cast, and screenplay.

See the screenplay credits for the titles of Weird Tales stories adapted to film. The date of the issue in which each story was first published is given in parenthesis following the title.

Crispin Burnham, Vernon Clark, Graeme Flanagan, and Gayle Lovett contributed valuable information to this filmography. Any errors (Cthulhu forbid!) are the responsibility of the compiler. Corrections and additions are welcomed.

Asylum (1972, Amicus, Cinerama, 92m.) Producers: Max J. Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky. Director: Roy Ward Baker. Cast: "Frozen Fear": Barbara Perkins (Bonnie), Richard Todd (Walter), Sylvia Syms (Ruth). "The Weird Tailor": Peter Cushing (Mr. Smith), Barry Morse (Bruno), Ann Firbank (Anna), John Franklyn-Robbins (Mr. Stebbins). "Lucy Comes to Stay": Britt Ekland (Lucy), Charlotte Rampling (Barbara), James Villiers (George), Megs Jenkins (Miss Higgins). "Mannikins of Horror": Herbert Lom (Byron), Patrick Magee (Dr. Rutherford), Robert Powell (Dr.

Martin), Geoffrey Bayldon (Max). Screenplay: Robert Bloch, from four of his Weird Tales stories: "Frozen Fear" (May 1946), "The Weird Tailor" (July 1950), "Lucy Comes to Stay" (January 1952), and "Mannikins of Horror" (December 1939).

Conan the Barbarian (1982, Universal, 127m.) Producers: Buzz Feitshans and Raffaella DeLaurentiis. Director: John Milius. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger (Conan), James Earl Jones (Thulsa Doom), Max von Sydow (King Osric), Sandahl Bergman (Valeria), Ben Davidson (Rexor), Cassandra Gaviola (The Witch), Gerry Lopez (Subotai), Mako (The Wizard), Valerie Quennessen (The Princess), William Smith (Conan's Father), Luis Barboo (Red Hair), Franco Columbo (Pictish Scout), Leslie Foldvary (Sacrificial Snake Girl), Gary Herman (Osric's Guard), Erik Holmey (Turanian War Officer), Akio Mitamura (Mongol General), Nadluskka (Conan's Mother), Jorge Sanz (Young Conan), Sven Ole Thorsen (Thorgrim), Kiyoshi Yamasaki (Sword Master). Screenplay: John Milius and Oliver Stone, based on the character created by Robert E. Howard. The film includes scenes from several Howard stories published in Weird Tales: "A Witch Shall Be Born" (December 1934), "Queen of the Black Coast" (May 1934), "The Tower of the Elephant" (March 1933), and "Worms of the Earth" (November 1932).

The Crimson Cult aka Curse of the

Crimson Altar aka The Crimson Altar (1968, Tigon, American International, 87m.) Producer: Louis M. Heyward. Director: Vernon Sewell. Cast: Boris Karloff (Professor Marshe), Christopher Lee (J. D. Morley), Mark Eden (Robert Manning), Virginia Wetherell (Eve), Barbara Steele (Lavinia Morley), Rupert Davies (Dr. Radford, the vicar), Michael Gough (Elder, the butler), Rosemarie Reede (Esther), Derek Tansley (judge), Michael Warren (chauffeur), Ron Pember (gas station attendant), Denys Peek (Peter Manning/blacksmith), Nita Lorraine (woman with a whip), Carol Anne, Jenny Shaw (virgins), Vivienne Carlton (sacrifice victim), Roger Avon (Sergeant Tyson), Paul McNeil (party guest), Christine Pryor, Kerry Dean, Stephanie Marion, Rosalind Royale (party girls), Millicent Scott (stripper at party), Vicky Richards (belly dancer at party), Tasma Bereton (painted girl at party), Kevin Smith (drunk at party), Lita Scott (girl with cockerel), Terry Raven, Douglas Mitchell (drivers in car chase), Nova St. Claire (girl in car chase). Screenplay: Mervyn Haisman, Henry Lincoln, and Gerry Levy, suggested by H. P. Lovecraft's "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (July 1933).

Dominique (1978, Grand Prize Productions/A Sword & Sorcery Production, 100m.) Producers: Milton Subotsky and Andrew Donally. Director: Michael Anderson. Cast: Cliff Robertson (David Ballard), Jean Simmons (Dominique Ballard), Jenny Agutter (Ann Ballard), Simon Ward (Tony Calvert), Ron Moody (Dr. Rogers), Judy Geeson (Marjorie Craven), Michael Jayston (Arnold Craven), Flora Robson (Mrs. Davis), David Tomlinson (Soliciter),

Jack Warner (George), Leslie Dwyer, Erin Geraghty, Brian Hayes, Ian Holden, Jack McKenzie, Michael Nightingale, Michael Japher. Screenplay: Edward Abraham and Valerie Abraham, from Harold Lawlor's "What Beckoning Ghost?" (July 1948).

The Dunwich Horror (1970, American International, 90m.) Producer: Roger Corman. Director: Daniel Haller. Cast: Sandra Dee (Nancy Walker), Dean Stockwell (Wilbur Whateley), Ed Begley (Dr. Henry Armitage), Sam Jaffe (Old Whateley), Lloyd Bochner (Dr. Cory), Barboura Morris (Mrs. Cole), Talia Coppola Shire (Cora), Jason Wingreen (police chief), Michael Fox (Dr. Raskin), Joanna Moore Jordan (Lavinia), Beech Dickerson (Mr. Cole), Jack Pierce (Reege), Donna Baccala (Elizabeth Hamilton), Toby Russ (librarian), Michael Haynes (guard). Screenplay: Curtis Lee Hanson, Henry Rosenbaum, and Ronald Silkosky, from H. P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror" (April 1929).

Fiend Without a Face (1958, Amalgamated, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 73m.) Producer: John Croydon, Director: Arthur Crabtree. Cast: Marshall Thompson (Major Jeff Cummings), Kim Parker (Barbara Griselle), Terence Kilburn (Captain Al Chester), Kynaston Reeves (Professor Walgate), Michael Balfour (Sergeant Kasper), Gil Winfield (Dr. Warren), Stanley Maxted (Colonel Butler), James Dyrenforth (Major Hawkins), Peter Madden (Dr. Bradley), R. Meadows White (Ben Adams), Launce Maraschal (Melville), Lala Lloyd (Amelia Adams), Robert MacKenzie (Gibbons), Shane Cordell (nurse), Kerrigan Prescott

(atomic engineer). Screenplay: Herbert J. Leder, from Amelia Reynolds Long's "The Thought-Monster" (March 1930).

The Haunted Palace (1963, Alta Vista, American International, 85m.) Producer: Roger Corman. Director: Roger Corman. Cast: Vincent Price (Charles Dexter Ward / Joseph Curwen), Debra Paget (Ann Ward), Lon Chaney, Jr. (Simon Orne), Frank Maxwell (Dr. Marinus Willett), Leo Gordon (Edgar Weeden), Elisha Cook, Jr. (Peter Smith), John Dierkes (Jacob West), Milton Parsons (Jabez Hutchinson), Cathy Merchant (Hester Tillinghast), Guy Wilkerson (Leach), Harry Ellerbe (minister), I. Stanford Jolley (boat captain), Darlene Lucht (young woman victim), Barboura Morris (Mrs. Weeden), Bruno Ve Sota (bartender). Screenplay: Charles Beaumont. Nominally based on the poem by Edgar Allan Poe, this is actually an adaptation of H. P. Lovecraft's The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (May 1941, July 1941). Beaumont's screenplay also borrows ideas from Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror" (April 1929) and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (January 1942).

The House That Dripped Blood (1970, Amicus, Cinerama, 102m.) Producers: Max J. Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky. Director: Peter Duffell. Cast: Frame Story: John Bennett (Inspector Holloway), John Bryans (Stoker). "Method for Murder": Denholm Elliott (Charles Hillyer), Joanna Dunham (Alice Hillyer), Tom Adams (Dominick), Robert Lang (Psychiatrist). "Wax-works": Peter Cushing (Philip Grayson), Joss Ackland (Rogers), Wolfe Morris (Waxworks Propri-

etor). "Sweets to the Sweet": Christopher Lee (John Reid), Chloe Franks (Jane Reid), Nyree Dawn Porter (Ann). "The Cloak": Jon Pertwee (Paul Henderson), Ingrid Pitt (Carla Lind), Geoffrey Bayldon (Von Hartmann). Screenplay: Robert Bloch, from his stories. Two are from Weird Tales: "Wax-works" (January 1939) and "Sweets to the Sweet" (March 1947).

The Skull (1965, Amicus, Paramount, 83m.) Producers: Milton Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg. Director: Freddie Francis. Cast: Peter Cushing (Professor Christopher Maitland), Christopher Lee (Sir Matthew Phillips), Patrick Wyndham (Anthony Marco), Jill Bennett (Jane Maitland), Nigel Green (Inspector Wilson), Patrick Magee (police surgeon), Anna Palk (maid), Michael Gough (auctioneer) Frank Forsyth (judge), George Coulouris (Dr. Londe), Peter Woodthorpe (Travers), Paul Stockman (first guard), Geoffrey Cheshire (second guard), Maurice Good (phrenologist), April Olrich (French girl), George Hilsdon (policeman), Jack Silk (driver). Screenplay: Milton Subotsky, from Robert Bloch's "The Skull of the Marquis de Sade" (September 1945).

Something Wicked This Way Comes (1983, Walt Disney Productions, Buena-Vista, 94m.) Producer: Peter Vincent Douglas. Director: Jack Clayton. Cast: Jason Robards (Charles Halloway), Jonathan Pryce (Mr. Dark), Diane Ladd (Mrs. Nightshade), Royal Dano (Tom Fury), Vidal Peterson (Will Halloway), Shawn Carson (Jim Nightshade), Mary Grace Canfield (Miss Foley), Richard Davalos (Mr. Crosetti), Jake Dengel (Mr. Tetley), Jack Dodson (Mr. Douglas), Bruce M. Fischer (Mr. Googer), Ellen Geer (Mrs. Halloway), Pam Grier

(Dust Witch), Brendon Klinger (Cooger as a child), James Stacy (Ed, the bartender), Angelo Rossitto (Little Person #1), Peter D. Risch (Little Person #2), Tim T. Clark (Teenage boy), Jill Carroll (Teenage girl), Tony Christopher (Young Ed), Sharan Lea (Young Miss Foley), Scott De Roy (Cooger as a young man), Sharon Ashe (Townswoman), Arthur Hill (Narrator). Screenplay: Ray Bradbury, from his novel, which had its genesis in his story "The Black Ferris" (May 1948).

Torture Garden (1967, Amicus, Columbia, 93m.) Producers: Max J. Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky. Director: Freddie Francis. Cast: Frame Story: Burgess Meredith (Dr. Diablo), Clytie Jessop (Atropos), Michael Ripper (Gordon Roberts), Timothy Bateson (fairground barker). "Enoch": Michael Bryant (Colin Williams), Maurice Denham (Colin's uncle), Catherine Finn (Nurse Parker), Frank Forsyth (tramp), Michael Hawkins (constable), Niall MacGinnis (doctor). "Terror over Hollywood": Beverly Adams (Carla Hayes), Nicole Shelby (Millie), Robert Hutton (Bruce Benton), John Phillips (Eddie Storm), David Bauer (Mike Charles), Bernard Kay (Dr. Heim). "Mr. Steinway": Barbara Ewing (Dorothy Endicott), John Standing (Leo Wilson), Ursula Howells (Maxine Chambers). "The Man Who Collected Poe": Jack Palance (Ronald Wyatt), Peter Cushing (Lancelot Canning), Hedger Wallace (Edgar Allan Poe). Screenplay: Robert Bloch, from his stories. One is from Weird Tales: "Enoch" (September 1946).

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

All films in this filmography are

in color except Fiend Without a Face, which is in black and white.

Asylum was cut to 86m. and released in 1980 as House of Crazies.

The Crimson Cult was released in Britain in 1968 as Curse of the Crimson Altar (aka The Crimson Altar). It was not released in the U. S.

A short clip from Fiend Without a Face, showing people being attacked by brain-like creatures, is included in the documentary film It Came from Hollywood (1982).

In the adaptation of "Enoch" in Torture Garden, the demon is named "Balthazar" instead of "Enoch."

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Lovecraft's "Weird Families"

By Ralph E. Vaughan

They have been with humanity since the beginning of civilization and beyond. They accompanied the first migrations to the New World, and they are with us today. H. P. Lovecraft knew them well and often used them in his stories. It is even possible that you, gentle reader, are aware of a "weird family" living in your locale.

The weird family--a family, either nuclear or extended, living unto itself and adhering to its own strange, sometimes savage, customs--was a staple of Eurasian belief from the Early Middle Ages forward. There were many times when repeated attacks by so-called vampires or werewolves were tracked to isolated clans living unknown in remote portions of the hinterland. Travelers along deserted trails had to be wary of weird families because, in addition to robbery, they also practiced cannibalism, and discoveries of their lairs often turned up grisly remains of their victims.

When the New World was discovered either some weird families emigrated from Europe or normal families were transformed by conditions along the frontier. It seems the first person to notice this phenomenon in America was a Frenchman, Michel Jean de Crevecoeur, who, in his essay "What is an American" (1782) warned of remote families far from the power of example or the check of shame and who "exhibit the most hideous parts of our society." These families, Crevecoeur noted, receded even deeper into the woods than other pioneer families, and he added, in very Lovecraftian prose, that "there is something in the proximity of the woods which is very singular." Even

today, people from the cities tend to fear and mistrust the families on the edges of civilization, believing them to be as backward as their environment and as savage, secretly ascribing to them the twin taboos of incest and cannibalism.

Lovecraft knew that these weird families existed and that they were far different from the ordinary run of folks, and he exploited them in many of his stories. In "The Picture in the House," during his verbose but effective introduction, Lovecraft states that seekers after the terrible love ". . . most of all the ancient, lonely farmhouses of backwoods New England; for there the dark elements of strength, solitude, grotesqueness and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous."

Of course, we all know that it is not really the houses which are all that horrible but that in "such houses have dwelt generations of strange people, whose like the world has never seen." These people "were not beautiful in their sins."

In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," Lovecraft introduces us to not one weird family, but a whole town of them. Innsmouth, in fact, becomes one vast family, an extended one, shunned by all the decent folk of the surrounding countryside. It is not just the fact that people tell tales about deals with the devil and strange rituals; the people of Innsmouth have a special look, an inbred look which would suggest incest and a reversion to more savage ways.

In Innsmouth, we find the weird family run wild. They are safe among their own kind, so they drop the public secrecy which has always been their mark. Though Lovecraft does

not say that the inhabitants of other towns are afraid of being eaten if they go to Innsmouth, he does say that they don't go there if they can help it, and they don't stay long if they can't. What are they really afraid of? They, of course, do not know, but it is that very vagueness which allows the weird family to exist among us.

The story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" shows a member of a weird family, without making his family the focus of the tale. It is important, however, that Lovecraft here recognizes the conditions which can create the weird family: ". . . isolation for nearly three centuries in the hilly fastnesses of a little-traveled countryside has caused them to sink to a kind of barbaric degeneracy, rather than advance with their more fortunately placed brethren of the thickly settled districts."

In "The Lurking Fear," Lovecraft has his narrator come into contact with a hidden weird family, one which has existed in legend only for a very long time. What he encounters is the sort of family which was already a part of folklore in Europe--incestuous, cannibalistic creatures that had once been human beings, who now lurked through the darkness and along the lonely trails, waiting for passersby and the curious.

Even in stories which do not deal directly with the weird family, Lovecraft suggests that some of his characters may have been descended from one. Time after time, the old Lovecraftian bugaboo of a tainted family is brought up to explain why a certain person acts as he does.

Of all of the families Lovecraft created in his fiction, the weirdest would, of course, have to be the Whateleys, from "The Dunwich Horror." Though the whole village of Dunwich, to outsiders, would appear "repellently decadent, having gone

far along that path of retrogression so common in many New-England backwaters," the Whateleys are the real force of decadence in the town.

The Whateleys are not a hidden weird family. Everyone in Dunwich knows they are strange and different, and shuns them accordingly, but as expected, no one can really put a finger on what exactly makes people want to shun them. As stated previously, that very vagueness is what protects those who live among mankind from everything but mob violence. Like all weird families, the Whateleys committed their sins in secret and kept them unto themselves.

The sin of the Whateleys, though, was not one of inbreeding, but one of outbreeding. Lavinia Whateley, a deformed albino, mated with a monster from Beyond and gave birth to monsters. The people of Dunwich had no knowledge of this and, gossip being what it is, in all probability connected the birth of her child with the only man they had ever seen her with--her father. If they had known that the father of Wilbur Whateley was a monster rather than Lavinia's own father or some supposed stranger it probably would not have seemed any more monstrous to them. After all, any monstrosity would still have resided in the souls of the Whateleys rather than in any act that they committed.

Judging from his stories and letters, Lovecraft was obsessed with decadence and the decline of humanity on an individual level. One has to wonder then if Lovecraft was just using the widespread (and, therefore, acceptable) myth of the weird family living among us to produce good prose. Or was he trying to give voice to some fear that he felt within himself, that all of us feel as well?

Belief in the weird family is
(continued on page 47)

H.P. Lovecraft and Isadora Duncan Contemporaries and Artists

By Carolyn Lee Boyd

"... to which detestable pounding and piping dance slowly, awkwardly, and absurdly the gigantic Ultimate gods. . . ."

--H. P. Lovecraft,
The Dream-Quest of
Unknown Kadath

When Fate hears the word "artist," she seems unable to control her bizarre and capricious sense of humor. For some thirty-six years there dwelt on earth two small hunks of flesh-and-blood whose lives never crossed, but whose art at once ran parallel, opposite, and intertwined, whose modes of living couldn't have been more different but who would have understood each other intimately, and who were the living antithesis and proof of each other's art. One of the great historical questions of the twentieth century must be "If H. P. Lovecraft and Isadora Duncan had gotten trapped in the same stalled elevator, what would they have talked about?"

If they began at the beginning, most probably their similarity of background. Each grew up in America in the late nineteenth century, Duncan born about thirteen years before Lovecraft. Each came from a poor family without a father. Both knew what it was to be outcast by the conventional Victorian middle-class as children. Their self-educations included the classics, European philosophy, and a wide range of contemporary literature. They could have spent hours talking about their mothers--both overbearing, prudish, and exercising an unnatural and un-

healthy hold over their children's emotional life.

Perhaps it was this maternal overprotectiveness that kept both attempting to live in ideal worlds throughout their adulthoods. While Lovecraft was using archaic spellings and living the life of an eighteenth century gentleman, Duncan tried her best to become a modern Diana, living by the laws of the Greek Gods.¹ While he pursued an ideal order, she pursued an ideal Beauty.² Both had romantic lives which began late³ and were either unfulfilling or the cause of great grief, probably not unrelated to the influences of their mothers.

For Duncan, living by the classical ideals resulted in her exile from America because of her nonmarital relationship with the Russian poet Serge Esenin, which she considered to be sanctioned by the highest god, Apollo.⁴ Throughout her career she was banned by many American theatres, most notably in Boston, for her "disarranged" attire, which she considered essential to her theory of the human body as the highest beauty.⁵ Lovecraft was also an outcast in his own country. His ideal way of life was long gone, and the cultural and economic structure of America had, in his time, no place for him. Still, it is doubtful Lovecraft could have composed his works while tied physically and intellectually to a 9-to-5 job, or that Duncan could have created what she did on the stages of Europe and Russia in the artistic backwater of early-twentieth-century America.

Duncan and Lovecraft stood side by side on the intellectual plane as well. Each, in thought and theory, made a beeline straight from the ancients to Rationalism to Nietzsche, whom Duncan called "the dancing philosopher."¹⁶ Their main difference in theology seems to have been that, while Lovecraft gave up belief in the ancient gods in childhood, Duncan never stopped referring to them. Of conventional contemporary deities, she said, "People invent gods for themselves. There is nothing beyond what we know, what we invent or imagine. All Hell is right here on earth. And all Paradise."⁷ While Lovecraft's anti-religious leanings allowed, and even led, him to create an entire pantheon, Duncan desired only to reestablish dance as the religious ritual it was for the Greeks, "the old dance which is to become the new."⁸ One can almost hear the Cthulhu worshippers uttering the same cry.

So, why did these two near-twins become opposites almost as soon as they put theory into art? Duncan knew nothing but art; Lovecraft wrote two stories about artists, "Pickman's Model" and "The Music of Erich Zann." Besides the obvious difference in tone, other, unrelated divergencies appear. In Lovecraft's work, art, like life, is an exclusively male concern. Neither women nor any sign of the female impulse crosses his pages. To Duncan, Art equals Beauty equals Female. Her work was "symbolic of the freedom of women."⁹ Her ideal human was a female Dancer of the Future, "the highest intelligence in the freest body."¹⁰ Given that the traditional female psyche is emotional, melancholic, and easily terrified, and the traditional male psyche is intellectual, optimistic, and free, one begins to wonder about traditions.

For Lovecraft's Pickman and

Zann, the pursuit of art leads to degeneration; for Duncan, art is the road to regeneration. Poor Pickman, "the foulest being that ever leaped the bounds of life into the pits of myth and madness."¹¹ And this from his last friend! Still, it doesn't seem to be the art that terrifies so much as the uncontrollable forces behind the art, leaving Zann's "blue eyes . . . bulging, glassy, and sightless" and his playing "a blind, mechanical, unrecognizable orgy."¹² It was precisely this force--the harmonious, benevolent side of it--which Duncan called "Nature"¹³ and that she believed was conjured through dance. Its power, she said, compelled men during the reign of Pope Innocent VIII to worship a statue of a Roman girl for its sheer beauty.¹⁴ Had it been of an Old One, the tale could have been one of Lovecraft's.

The silent partner of both Lovecraft and Duncan is the future. Without the threat of the unresolved endings of "Pickman's Model," "The Music of Erich Zann," and others, the stories would be merely macabre. After all, who would care about two artists whose "world of beauty lay in some far cosmos of the imagination"¹⁵ if not for their rather nasty habit of involving ordinary Joes? The only other art form of the period that was as downbeat was blues and jazz, a form Duncan hated.¹⁶ She was a soldier fighting for her internationalist, child-oriented, anarchist vision of the future where a more mature mankind brings about all goodness by dancing "a human translation of the gravitation of the universe."¹⁷ Time, in each case, was to be overwhelmed by the timeless.

Lovecraft's art was essentially a journey "inward," while Duncan's was a journey "outward." Pickman and Zann sank deeper into themselves as the madness of creativity ensued. At the end of "The Music

of Erich Zann," the writer shakes Zann, but he "did not respond, and still the viol shrieked on without slackening."¹⁸ Pickman also worked alone, shunned by the world and shunning it, almost like the Old Gentleman himself, at times. Duncan's dancing was inherently social, meant to transform her audience, serving as a conduit so that "my magnetic force can go forth from me covering the people in uninterrupted rays as the sun's light covers the earth."¹⁹ It was for this reason she dreamed of building a round Greek theatre.²⁰

In opposite ways, each was proof of the other's theories. Duncan was the living example of ancient forces existing beneath the sea of the psyche, ready to emerge and disrupt the polite world at any time. Onstage, she used primitive rituals to call them forth, and once called up, no one has yet been able to put these forces down. It would be difficult to find a better illustration than Lovecraft of the ill effects of the repression, restriction of the physical, and emotional calcification of the Victorian period, just as Duncan foretold, or the happy effects of his eventual release the refrom.

Why did the creative paths of Lovecraft and Duncan meet, run parallel, diverge, and cross again? Why was Duncan a worshipper of light and Lovecraft a worshipper of darkness? The answer is, of course, that people are perverse, contradictory, and never reducible to such generalizations. Lovecraft's private writings, his letters, poetry, playful fiction, could be quite humorous, and his life was as happy and fulfilled as anyone can fairly expect a life to be on this earth. Nor did Duncan escape despair, especially after the deaths of her two children, when she wrote to their father, "This so-called real world is the refinement of torture . . . I can see only Diedre and Patrick

skipping and dancing about and then lying there all still and white and cold."²¹ For her last performance she awed her audience by hardly moving to the dolorous Funeral March of Chopin.²² All great artists understand the resolution of opposites and can work in one state of mind while living in the other.

What we have here is a classic conflict between two classic American types. Lovecraft, the colonized European, continuing the literary line from the ancestral land, an individualist, preaching the evils of destruction that come inevitably from change. A political conservative, his stories are inherently pro-status quo: everything is going fine until somebody refuses to let sleeping gods lie. Lovecraft's America was where most of his pantheon chose to emerge amid the idiot Yankees. In the other corner we have the quintessential American revolutionary--absolutely convinced that only away from the stagnation of European culture can a New Order be wrought, that the future is in the hands of the presently oppressed and those who take social action. She was an active feminist and instrumental in the fight to save Sacco and Vanzetti.²³ She traced her dancing back to her Scotch-Irish grandmother's jig²⁴ and believed that the North American earth and air were infused with freedom so that "with the wildest turn of the imagination you cannot picture the Goddess of Liberty dancing the ballet."²⁵ At this time American artists were fighting to prove equality with Europe, a fact which gives their viewpoints double significance.

But that was fifty years ago, and Lovecraft and Duncan are both dead, so what do their quarrels matter now? For one thing, their predictions have, symbolically at least, come true. Mankind has indeed re-

leased a Lovecraftian all-destructive power from the depths of the earth, and disharmony between man and Duncan's Nature has wreaked havoc on body and soul. As usual, artists seem to know these things first. So, the question now becomes, "If Lovecraft and Duncan had been trapped in an elevator and discussed all this, what would they have decided on as a solution?" It's doubtful either one would have won the other over--after all, the debate between the past and order on the one hand and anarchy and the future on the other has been going on full-steam ever since it became fashionable worldwide a couple of centuries ago. Could the answer perhaps lie in the very movement of the pendulum back and forth, like Lovecraft's cycles of the rising and falling of his pantheon, or Duncan's waves? It all sounds suspiciously like the resolution of pi, which is, after all, a good definition of art, and life.

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- 3 Francis Steegmuller, Your Isadora (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 3.
- 4 Isadora Duncan, Isadora Speaks (San Francisco: City Lights, 1981), p. 132.
- 5 Isadora Duncan, "The Dancer and Nature." Reprinted in The Art of the Dance (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), p. 67, and throughout all of Duncan's writing.
- 6 Isadora Duncan, "I See America Dancing." Reprinted in The Art of the Dance, p. 48.
- 7 Isadora Duncan, Isadora Speaks, p. 123.

- 8 Isadora Duncan, "The Dancer and Nature," p. 68.
- 9 Isadora Duncan, "The Dance of the Future," p. 63.
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- 11 H. P. Lovecraft, "Pickman's Model, in The Dunwich Horror (New York: Lancer Books, 1963), p. 48.
- 12 H. P. Lovecraft, "The Music of Erich Zann," in The Dunwich Horror, p. 81.
- 13 Isadora Duncan, "The Dancer and Nature." This theme runs throughout many works.
- 14 Isadora Duncan, "The Dance of the Future," p. 62.
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- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Steegmuller, Your Isadora, p. 127. Letter from Isadora Duncan to Gordon Craig.
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- 23 Franklin Rosemont, "Introduction" to Isadora Speaks, p. xv.
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The Unpleasant Dreams of H.P. Lovecraft

By M. Eileen McNamara, MD

There is something very compelling about the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft, something that arrests the attention, inwardly perturbs, but is difficult to delineate. It is not just the writing style of his short stories, which is better than most in the horror genre, although marred by excessive verbiage at the expense of too little character description and tortuous plot development. The pantheon of monster/gods strikes one at first as more bizarre than terrifying, yet the reader can be surprised to discover how frightened a Lovecraft story can render him, how disturbed, how often his mind can return almost involuntarily to his work, when it often does not really seem to merit such a reaction.

In my college days I was fortunate enough to number among my acquaintances a group of quite genuine witches. It was from them that I learned just how fascinated people could become with Lovecraft's works.

One spring afternoon, I sat with one of the witches in a hotel room, with the very strange combination of blue sky, sun, and trees seen through the open window, and letters from the church of Satan, a black velvet altar cloth with silver emblems, chalices and robes decorating the inside walls. I listened as this clean-cut, blond-haired, All-American looking man told me, warned me, that everything Lovecraft wrote was true. My reaction to this incredible statement, to say the least, was somewhat mixed. I had befriended the witches not as a follower, but rather to study this interesting sub-

culture, a sort of anthropological field work. Still, it was difficult to discredit categorically everything they said. I had found that these witches numbered among them some very intelligent people, including my fellow physicists, and I had seen a few minor incidents that even my skeptical eye found hard to explain.

Still, I found it all rather difficult to believe. Certainly, though, my friends were convinced of the truth of the statement. I had copied a line in one of the alien tongues Lovecraft employed in his works to decorate my door, and they darkly informed me that unless I removed it, disaster from space might visit me. One of the witches told me of actually having met one of the strange man-fishes that figure so prominently in Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos.

When I inquired as to the source of Lovecraft's material, they replied that Lovecraft, along with August Derleth and several others, had belonged to a coven of witches termed "The Starry Wisdom Sect" in Maine that had contact with the alien gods.

None of the biographical data available on Lovecraft supports such stories, but why would his work, rather than that of Poe or Arthur Machen, inspire such claims? I think my friends the witches were reacting to the same elements in the stories that I found so disturbing, the disquieting ring of truth, but accrediting it to the wrong source. The origin of Lovecraft's material was not historical fact but his own dreams. That is what bothers us, what grips us despite the poor writing, the trite

horrors.

Our reason, our conscious mind can find nothing to explain our fear because there is an unconscious component, sprung from those dreams and incorporated into the stories, to which our own unconscious involuntarily reacts. What I would like to do here is examine some of the biographical material on Lovecraft to see if we can clarify some of the symbolism behind the dreams and trace some story elements to motifs in his life. As references, I have used two excellent works on his life: Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos by Lin Carter and Lovecraft: A Biography by L. Sprague deCamp.

Lovecraft was born in 1890, the only child of Susan Whipple and Winfield Scott Lovecraft. Susan was one of three daughters of a wealthy and established Rhode Island family, Winfield a handsome if somewhat foppish salesman. Susan was 31, Winfield 35 at the time of their nuptials, and two years later Howard was born. When the child was two and a half, his father suffered a deteriorating mental condition that necessitated his hospitalization until the time of his death five and a half years later.

In light of modern medical knowledge, it seems probable that Winfield had tertiary syphilis, which can attack the nervous system. Whether the condition was transmitted to his wife and son has been much speculated upon but remains unknown.

It is certain that in her later life Susan suffered hallucinations and delusions, but whether it was due to syphilis or her situation is not clear. Very little of the relationship of Howard and his father is known, but it is interesting to speculate upon the consequences of the father's absence just when the child is in the

midst of the Oedipal stage of development, forming a sexual attachment to his mother and wishing the father, his rival, gone. Cases are well documented in which, if the father dies at this time, the child perceives it as a result of his wishes, and the subsequent guilt can permanently affect the child.

Susan's reaction to the illness and death of Winfield is more certain. She became even more possessive and protective of the only remaining link to her husband: her child. Until her death in 1921, at the age of 64, or until Howard was 31, she dominated her child, rarely leaving his side, taking excessive care of him to the detriment of the development of his own independence. Howard never spent a night away from home until the age of 30. She fluttered about her son's delicate health, bringing glasses of milk to his room hourly, constantly checking to see if he had fainted.

Interestingly enough, in spite of her overt concern, Susan did some devastating things to her child. To begin with, she had always wanted a girl, and kept Howard in dresses and curls until the age of six, when his golden locks were shorn despite her tears of protest. The young Lovecraft could be heard to chirp on coaxing, "I'm a little girl." Also, despite her love for his curls, Susan insisted throughout her life to both her neighbors and her child that Howard was so hideously ugly that he had to hide his face in shame on the street.

Lovecraft, who in actuality grew to a tall, well-built, moderately handsome man, always retained this crippling self-image of weakness and unattractiveness.

Most interesting is that despite Susan's excessive mothering, she abhorred physical contact and rarely touched her child. With this almost

total absence of demonstrated physical affection so important to the healthy development of a child's sexual and social orientation, and in light of the other factors reviewed above, we should not be surprised to learn that Lovecraft grew to possess, at least on the surface, a very asexual, reserved nature.

Parents' attitudes have great influence on those of their children, and Susan's horror of things sexual doubtlessly affected Howard. In addition, the conviction of his own ugliness led Lovecraft to believe that no woman could desire him anyway, and he remained unkissed until the age of 32. One can speculate on whether Lovecraft or his mother were aware of the sexual nature of Winfield's disease. Such information could also color their attitudes on sex.

When Lovecraft was 14, the family lost their dearly beloved home with the same suddenness and surprise with which they had lost Winfield. The small family was forced to move to tinier, less elegant quarters, and Lovecraft never stopped mourning the loss. It was not so much the fall in prestige as the abrupt severance from a location he had strongly associated with love and security; the loss of the objects was tantamount to the loss of the feelings. Did the unexpected loss, twice, of a loved object play a role in the subsequent development in Lovecraft of a schizoid personality?

"Schizoid" is a psychiatric term that refers to an individual who spends an abnormal amount of time to himself, withdrawn, avoiding human contact. Sometimes people react to the shock of loss by seeming to form no more close bonds; they can avoid further losses of loved ones or things by having none. To avoid unwanted company, Lovecraft, to quote DeCamp, would "pretend to be out--even drawing the curtains so

that no crack of light would show beneath the door. He received friends in bathrobe and slippers, apologetically explaining he was just going to bed."

Lovecraft remained devoted only to his mother. He brought all of his thoughts to her for approval. Her death when he was 32 left him adrift, and he was quick to marry, in only a year and a half, a woman seven years older than himself. My friend Kevin Hunt, novelist and historian, has been kind enough to point out that such a practice was not at all uncommon then, but a comment of Lovecraft's wife, Sonia Greene, is interesting: "I was seven years Howard's senior, and he said that nothing could please him better." Was Lovecraft trying to replace his mother? At any rate, the attempt was unsuccessful; the marriage dissolved in a few years. I suspect Sonia wanted a husband and not a son.

"Lovecraft thought of himself," notes DeCamp, "as a kind of disembodied intellect, undistracted by human passions." Lovecraft wrote of himself, "I shall never be very merry or very sad, for I am more inclined to analyse than to feel." If we were to take Lovecraft at his word, we should expect his writings to consist of scientific, objective material. But look at his works! This self-styled rationalist's dreams were full of nightmares, and the preponderance of his material deals with the very nonrational, nonanalytic world of terror. It can be seen that there is much, very much, held beneath the surface of this seemingly desireless man, that finds expression in his dreams and his stories.

How can we correlate this brief survey with some facets of Lovecraft's works? The major corpus revolves about the Cthulhu Mythos, a group of short stories sharing a common theme. A pantheon of Elder

Gods exist just outside the space-time fabric of the earth. They dominated the world millenia ago, until they were finally expelled, and threaten to repossess it again. If they were to succeed in breaking in again, the human race would be enslaved. In other words, what we have here is the sanity of the world just barely being maintained by keeping out destructive forces.

What I would like to suggest is that this is an analogue of Lovecraft's own life, a model for the repression of his own sexual and social drives. Very powerful, they threaten to overwhelm him unless kept in check. Along this line, we are not surprised to see many of Lovecraft's most powerful stories set in scenes of barrenness, cold. Lovecraft wrote that most of his dreams occurred in winter settings as well.

One of his fascinating short stories, "Cool Air," is about a dead man who maintains a sort of pseudo-life by keeping the temperature in his apartment below freezing. When the machine malfunctions and the warmth returns, he rots. Although Freud warns that there are no universal archetypes, that each person's fantasies are to be interpreted only by their own idiosyncratic symbolism, it is tempting to speculate as to whether in "Cool Air" Lovecraft is again dealing with himself, seeing himself destroyed if the warmth of human contact were to enter his life.

Consider the story "The Dunwich Horror": a deformed albino woman conceives a son by one of the Elder Gods, but the son grows to maturity seemingly normal. One day, this man is attacked by a watchdog which tears at his clothes to reveal that from the waist down, he is covered by black, matted hair. His legs are shaped like a dinosaur's, with an eye on each hip, and he possesses a tail. "Long greenish-gray tentacles with

red, sucking mouths" protrude from his abdomen, and shortly after his revelation, he dissolves into a sticky, whitish mass.

The sexual symbolism is striking, and perhaps this outwardly normal man, whose revelation of his hidden sexual nature results in his death when overwhelmed by that nature, is Lovecraft himself.

Of course, one can go into much greater detail, but this brief survey illustrates a few of the connections between Lovecraft's life and his work. Looking more closely at the foundations of the elements of terror in Lovecraft's stories can tell us a good deal about the man, and the analysis of our own reactions to the stories, about ourselves.

REUTERDAHL, RELATIVITY AND THE "AIMLESS WAVES"

(continued from page 25)

Kingston-Brown, Nevil. "The Cosmology of Azathoth," Crypt of Cthulhu No. 4, Easter tide 1982.

Pagels, Heinz R. The Cosmic Code. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982.

Rohrlich, Fritz. "Facing Quantum Mechanical Reality," Science, September 23, 1983.

Tierney, Richard L. "Relativity: Was Einstein First?," Hyst'ry Myst'ry Magazine No. 1, Garnerville, NY, 1983.

LOVECRAFT'S "WEIRD FAMILIES"

(continued from page 39)

double-edged. If we can believe that certain families around us are perverse, then we must accept the fact that others might see us in the same way. We are all part of humanity, and, as Lovecraft observed, "mankind, in short, is less evolved than I had thought."

Supernatural Horror in Lovecraft's Literature

By Charles Hoffman

Imbued with a number of aristocratic attitudes that proved tragically incompatible with his actual station in life, H. P. Lovecraft dedicated himself to the perfection of his art, eschewing as "tradesmanlike" any commercial considerations that would have enhanced his worldly comfort or advancement. Since HPL paid so heavy a price--life-long poverty, a failed marriage, and a premature death--for his steadfast refusal to compromise the integrity of his art in any way, admirers of his work would do well to consider just what Lovecraft's artistic aims were.

Despite the fact that Lovecraft's literary output consists primarily of horror stories, it would be an oversimplification to say that his main objective was merely to scare his readers. A man of Lovecraft's intelligence and breeding would have been hard pressed to find contentment by furnishing the readership of Weird Tales with cheap thrills. Still, it is safe to assume that his purpose was not to lull his audience into a sense of complacency. Lovecraft regarded with disdain the narrow, petty concerns of the average American during the twenties--possessions, frivolity, social status and other, similar interests that obsessed his contemporary F. Scott Fitzgerald during the "Jazz Age." In his own way, Lovecraft endeavored to widen the vistas of his readers, and strove to liberate their imaginations from the mundane. Unfortunately, Dunsanian fantasy didn't quite do the trick.

Faced with the dilemma of how to

capture the rapt attention of nonintellectuals and prevented by gentlemanly principle from employing such standbys as sex and violence like his colleague Robert E. Howard, Lovecraft sought the most effective manner in which to exploit what he considered "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind . . . fear."¹ He recognized even from the outset of his career the inadequacy of merely startling the reader at various intervals in the narrative, catching him off-guard with contrived frights placed (hopefully) where least expected. Such knee-jerk reactions did not begin to approximate genuine fear; there were fun houses for that sort of thing, and Lovecraft was too sophisticated to sneak up on his readers and yell "Boo!" In order to evoke true, consistent feelings of fear and tension, a certain mood had to be established and sustained. But what sort of mood?

To create a convincing atmosphere of omnipresent peril and imminent danger requires superior technical skills on the part of a writer, but for Lovecraft even this was not quite good enough. In his essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft deemed "the literature of mere physical fear"² inferior to the literature of spectral fear--the fear of monsters, evil spirits and the like that exist nowhere but in man's imagination. One may well wonder why a tale of a vampire should chill the spine more than an account of a very real murderer. Lovecraft himself employed an extract from Charles Lamb's Witches and Other Night-

Fears as a heading to "The Dunwich Horror," which reads in part, ". . . the archetypes are in us and eternal. How else should the recital of that which we know in a waking sense to be false come to affect us at all? Is it that we naturally conceive terror in such objects, considered in their capacity of being able to inflict upon us bodily injury? O, least of all! . . . That kind of fear here treated is purely spiritual. . . ." Lovecraft concurred that the "night-fears" are a heritage of our racial memory:

. . . all the conditions of savage dawn-life so strongly conduced toward a feeling of the supernatural, that we need not wonder at the thoroughness with which man's very hereditary essence has become saturated with religion and superstition. That saturation must, as a matter of plain scientific fact, be regarded as virtually permanent so far as the subconscious mind and inner instincts are concerned. . . . a vast residuum of powerful inherited associations clings around all the objects and processes that were once mysterious; however well they may now be explained. And more than this, there is an actual physiological fixation of the old instincts in our nervous tissue.

3

In a horror tale of the highest order, Lovecraft felt, "a certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present. . . ."⁴

A modern tale of spectral horror convincingly executed is no mean literary feat, for it re-evokes the irrational terrors that beset our ancestors automatically each evening when the sun set, terrors which dissolved centuries ago in the light of man's growing scientific knowledge.

However, when we read of an encounter with a ghost or other apparition, more than age-old instincts are stirred, for were we actually to witness such an event, it would mean that the world is not as we have been led to believe, and all our scientific knowledge would be cast in doubt. We would shrink in terror from the spectre, not necessarily because it offered us physical harm, but simply because it should not be. Borne upon us would be the horrific realization that something is deeply, terrifyingly, fundamentally wrong. In that instant the security of our knowledge of the universe and our place in it would be blasted to smithereens and we would be intellectually no better equipped than the naked caveman peering into the darkness beyond the glow of his campfire.

Works of horror fiction that arouse this sense of fundamental "wrongness" can be gripping indeed, and in some instances the effect is not achieved by design. Old horror movies on the late show can be scary simply because they are old. Black-and-white films from the thirties like The Black Cat and The Invisible Ray, viewed alone in the wee hours, can be unsettling because nothing looks right. Cars don't look like cars, clothes don't look like clothes; everything is all wrong. Watching such a film is an experience akin to looking through a strange window onto an alien landscape. When such a landscape is haunted by creatures whose very existence is contrary to both our common sense notion of reality and the true structure of the universe as revealed by science, our sense of anxiety is most acute. The fundamental "wrongness" of spectral horrors is perhaps epitomized by the self-contradicting term "living dead," which is used to describe vampires, zombies, and many other similar beings that abound in

the literature of spectral fear.

The disconcerting effect of the basic "wrongness" inherent in the presence of the "living dead" and other such logical absurdities is grasped on a gut level by most writers of horror fiction. Lovecraft, however, was possessed of superior mental faculties that enabled him to intellectualize what was merely a vague perception in the minds of his predecessors. This is evident in both the essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature" and the stories themselves. In the essay Lovecraft states that ultimate horror derives from "a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space."⁵ The notion expressed forms the cornerstone of the Cthulhu Mythos, for the metaphysics underlying Lovecraft's major works is founded on the idea that the universe itself is "all wrong." The true face of God is that of Azathoth, "the idiot chaos," and mankind's sense of belonging in the universe is possibly only because of our ignorance of the true nature of the cosmos. Thus Lovecraft utilizes the concept of "fundamental wrongness" to its maximum effect.

Most horror story writers elicit fear by playing on the reader's other emotions, either by provoking a shudder of revulsion by presenting that which is repulsive, ugly, or gross, or by engendering sympathy for the hapless victim. Lovecraft's somewhat more ambitious aim was to terrify the intellect rather than the emotions. While we may hold our breath in apprehension as a horrific fate is about to overtake Jamie Lee Curtis, Lovecraft's protagonists receive no such sympathy or empathy from us. They themselves are not important; what matters is the terrible truths they uncover. Love-

craft, rationalist and intellectual, had neither need nor inclination to resort to sentiment, for the terror in his tales stems from the contemplation of the hideous hidden truths he reveals. Significantly, he regards suspension of natural law as "that most terrible conception of the human brain."⁶ In his stories, the primary threat is not to life or limb, but to sanity. A notable percentage of Lovecraft's protagonists succumb to (or only narrowly escape) madness because the horrifying revelations they must eventually face prove to be too much for the human mind to bear. In "The Call of Cthulhu" Lovecraft asserts that the collective sanity of the human race will crumble when the truth about the universe is finally known. Lovecraft is the thinking man's horror author, for if the "malign and particular suspension or defeat" of natural law is indeed the human brain's most terrible conception, then it is also the human intellect's greatest challenge.

NOTES

¹"Supernatural Horror in Literature" in Dagon and Other Macabre Tales, p. 347.

²Ibid., p. 349.

³Ibid., p. 348.

⁴Ibid., p. 349.

⁵Ibid., p. 350.

⁶Ibid.

BACK ISSUES

Numbers 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, and 20 available for \$2 each. Saturnalia (#21) available for \$2.50. Outside USA and Canada add 75¢ postage for each back issue.

Did Lovecraft Read Middlemarch?

By Peter Cannon

In neither the Selected Letters nor "Suggestions for a Reading Guide" does Lovecraft mention the Victorian author George Eliot or her masterpiece, Middlemarch. Such fiction, unless of a Gothic cast, was not to his taste, as we know. And yet there are certain passages in Middlemarch which perhaps indicate that HPL was familiar with the novel.

To begin, one of the principal male characters--an ecclesiastical pedant with a bent for arcane research (sound familiar?)--baffles his prospective wife with some of his studies. "In their conversation before marriage, Mr. Casaubon had often dwelt on some explanation or questionable detail of which Dorothea did not see the bearing; but such imperfect coherence seemed due to the brokenness of their intercourse, and, supported by her faith in the future, she had listened with fervid patience to a recitation of possible arguments to be brought against Mr. Casaubon's entirely new view of the Philistine god Dagon and other fish-deities, thinking that hereafter she should see this subject which touched him so nearly from the same high ground whence doubtless it had become so important to him." Alas, Dorothea never comes to appreciate Dagon in the way that her husband does. Their marriage is not a success (how Lovecraft must have sympathized with the plight of the selfless scholar disappointed in domesticity!), and Mr. Casaubon dies prematurely. He leaves unfinished his masterwork, "Key to All the Mythologies"--a title as evocative of recondite mysteries

as any imagined by HPL.

Later, a rather odd-looking character makes a surprise appearance: "This was the stranger described by Mrs. Cadwallader as frog-face: a man perhaps about two or three and thirty, whose prominent eyes, thin-lipped, downward-curving mouth, and hair sleekly brushed away from a forehead that sank suddenly above the ridge of the eyebrows, certainly gave his face a batrachian unchangeableness of expression." Surely someone who would feel quite at home in Innsmouth!

Finally, after the tragic death of Mr. Casaubon, one character remarks of him and his chief antagonist: "'Well, you know, Casaubon was a little twisted about Ladislaw. Ladislaw has told me the reason--dislike of the bent he took, you know --Ladislaw didn't think much of Casaubon's notions, Thoth and Dagon --that sort of thing: and I fancy that Casaubon didn't like the independent position Ladislaw had taken up. . . .'" Recall the prominent role of Poles in "The Dreams in the Witch-House" and their dread of the supernatural.

Passages such as these are highly suggestive. Either Lovecraft read Middlemarch before writing "Dagon" (certainly no later than before writing "The Shadow over Innsmouth"), or else Eliot found copies of HPL's stories in a time machine sent back to 1870. The first possibility is about as likely as the second--but let all impartial fans of both George Eliot and H. P. Lovecraft judge for themselves.

FUN GUYS FROM YUGGOTH:

Patrice deG. Joubert

SAVED AT LAST!

The first time I ever saw a picture of Lovecraft, I naturally thought it was a drawing by some weird cartoonist like Bilal or Nicolet. I guess it was on the back-cover of Dagon. He looked so eerie . . . angry and scared at the same time. . . . Then I saw another picture, and another one, . . . and by the gods, I had to surrender to the incredible truth: these pictures were actually PHOTOGRAPHS!

Because of this first impression, the HPL Mythos has always had a tangible irreality of its own to me.

I can't remember too well, but I think it was my brother who told me about the Man. I was at the time in the process of quitting the rock scene. Showbiz was lessening in my interest as I was more and more charmed by literature, particularly horror and what is called in French the "fantastique." As a teenager I was a frenetic reader of all sorts of thrillers of any genre until I read a book I considered (and, by Yig, still do) a remarkable masterpiece: Dracula by Bram Stoker. I was hooked . . . and definitely damned.

As I said, it seems my younger brother introduced me to HPL. He knew him superficially well (he is more a Poe fan than a Theobald one), and so Lovecraft and I got acquainted. Rapidly, I began to dig in without really knowing a thing about the field except that Lovecraft was somehow an ignored figure and a weird myth-persona. But without a clue as to why, I actually had a strange feeling about the author, a feeling that I was on the verge of discovering something of crucial importance: something that would alter my very life.

Life is, but Hell is not, a hideous thing; Baron von Gustaff, my personal daemon, was particularly "on my side" at the time, and light came at last: I bought Le couleur tombee du ciel (The Colour out of Space, Presence du futur, Denoël ed.) and AAAHHHHH! Jouissance supreme!! Now this was what I'd been drooling for! Submerged, I was . . . delighted! (As happens frequently, the first mighty impression I got from this novel makes it my all-time favorite of HPL's works.) Soon, I had plunged into the œuvre of the Recluse, not to emerge for a long time.

For almost three years now, I've been actively devoting my life, heart and soul, to the horror genre. It provides me with the ultimate passion: Fear. Among the endless list of authors I love and respect, Lovecraft holds a very special throne, for I consider him to be unique and part of no known school. He isn't a pure science-fiction writer, nor is he a pure weird-taler. A unique blend of all of this and none of that. . . . In fact, I've always been amazed by the scholars' need to classify HPL in one way or another; why must they absolutely file him? Probably only to justify their illusory position as critics. . . .

Actually, HPL holds an important place in my day-to-day life; for nearly ten months now, I've become more and more acquainted with the Lovecraftians. Reading Lovecraft Studies, I discovered Crazy Bob's Crypt of Cthulhu, from which I learned of Nyctalops, the Esoteric Order of Dagon (of which I am now a member), and of course more books from the

(continued on page 55)

R'LYEH REVIEW

Collected Poems: Nightmares and Visions by Richard L. Tierney. Arkham House, 1981, 82 pp. \$10.

(Reviewed by Lin Carter)

If you have been noticing some fine macabre verse by Tierney the last several years in publications like Whispers, Nyctalops, Weirdbook and the like, the good news is that Arkham has published a bookfull of them. It makes a handsome addition to AH's select bookshelf of macabre verse; at 82 pages, it includes 67 poems, a hefty sampling of Tierney's best.

Many of the themes are drawn from the Mythos, others from Tolkien and Eddison. There are also five handsome translations from Baudelaire. Most of the verse in this book is excellent: for example, "Gods," a rousing ballad worthy of having come from the pen of Howard. My favorites are among the sonnets: "The Garrett-Room," "In Evil Dreams," and "The Pinnacles," but actually, all of the sonnets are good. The only real fault I can find in this selection is that there are just too many sonnets--46 sonnets out of 67 poems. The sonnet is a form that palls upon extended reading.

Occasionally, Tierney's ear falters: "Zarria" is nominally in iambic pentameter, i.e., ten syllables to the line. But some of the lines run to eleven, at least one to twelve. This is careless. Also, at times, the meter is distinctly inappropriate to the theme. "The Scrolls" is an example of this: the jaunty rhythm jars on the ear, spoiling what was meant to be a solemn, even a morbid piece of verse. Another example, "Hope," is a grim and bitter

poem, ruined by its tripping, light meter, better suited to humorous verse. A brief quote will suffice:

The world's a dead harlot--the
corpse of a slut
Where death-vultures settle to
rend and to glut
While Man flounders blind in the
gloom--
And Hope's a mirage on a desert
of sand
Where horrors go ravening over
the land,
And Life's but the road to doom.

At times, Tierney writes a line that makes you wince, as in the second line from this couplet from "Demon-Star":

To realms where hellish Algol
blinks and leers,
Encircled by putrescent plane-
toids.

("Putrescent planetoids," forsooth! Sounds like the title of an Edmond Hamilton yarn, written on an off-day.) At other times, Tierney makes use of clumsy false rhymes, as:

Might stir to unguessed urges as
it broods,
And softly rise to stalk the silent
woods.

"Broods" and "woods" do not rhyme; there is nothing wrong with using false rhymes, if they are employed throughout the piece. But in this sonnet, "The Swamp Dweller," they are not.

At other times, more happily, Tierney is capable of writing a truly beautiful line of verse, such as

The amber-lambent highlights of
your hair . . .

(from "Dream"), and

Up steps that climbed through
undefined dimensions

(from "Beyond the Maze"). In that
last line, he makes excellent use of
"heavy" sounds to build a mood.

Indeed, mood-building is Tierney's true talent; if the metrics don't always match the theme, if an occasional poor word-choice flaws a line (in one poem, Tierney uses "wham" as a verb, probably for the first time in the history of English verse), he displays a brilliant gift for building moods of somber gloom and haunting, gathering fear.

A fine collection of verse which belongs on every Crypt-reader's bookshelf.

Richard L. Tierney, "The Soul of Kephri" in Space & Time, number 66, Summer 1984. (The whole issue is 118 pp. and costs \$4. It may be ordered from the editor: Gordon Linzner, 138 West 70th Street, Apt. 4-B, New York, NY 10023.)

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

It is a time when the fantasy field is dominated by interchangeable books with interchangeable titles like Elfstone Gambit and The Sorcerer's Suitcase. Adolescent "D and D" fans will apparently devour anything that reads like a role-playing scenario. In the face of this, many of us prefer to stick with the classics: Howard, Smith, Lovecraft, Tolkien, Burroughs, etc. Yet occasionally a fantasy character or series breaks from the mediocre pack, seeming to pos-

sess the old pizzazz. Karl Edward Wagner's Kane is such a one and has received due acclaim and publication. Another such is Richard L. Tierney's Simon of Gitta, whose adventures are a bit harder to obtain given their too-sparse and scattered publication. In our last "R'lyeh Review," we reported a new Simon story in Weirdbook 19, and now it is our glad duty to announce that another has seen the light of day in Space & Time 66.

"The Soul of Kephri" may be Tierney's best Simon tale yet. Tierney has several story-teller's talents, such as the ability to tie together disparate bits of historical and mythic lore into a bold and coherent premise, as well as the knack for employing Hyborian and Cthulhu Myths elements in such a way as to tie the story into the Weird Tales cosmology without detracting from the story's originality. He uses these gifts to full advantage in "The Soul of Kephri." By the way, it is not difficult to spot influences on this story not only from REH and HPL, but also from George Lucas! But even these Tierney manages to weave into his seamless garment.

There are several more Simon of Gitta stories written and waiting to be published, and we may hope that more will appear soon. (Actually, we can do more than just hope--just wait till the special Tierney issue of Crypt of Cthulhu!)

"The Soul of Kephri" is the cover story in Space & Time 66, and the cover and interior illustrations for the story are by Gary Kato. The influence of the great Steve Ditko is readily apparent in Kato's work, and it fits the story well. Needless to say, there is much, much more in the issue (including, e.g., a "Steel Eye" robot detective mystery by C. Gottfried), but Tierney's story alone would make it worth the \$4.

Advice to the LOVECRAFT-LORN

death-or-death situation!

Not Enough Blood to Blush

Dear Don Wan,

Only a nouveau sanguinaire could think of this fly-by-night approach to good nutrition. Your supper companion should be very carefully chosen, and proper blood-type is not the only consideration. Excellent general health and good recuperative properties are also important to insure as rich and lasting a partnership as possible. The true gourmet would only dine with an entree of good hygiene and congenial personality.

Donna Death

Dear Donna Death,

I have recently joined you in the ranks of the undead, and everything they say about the night life is true --except for one not-so-little detail. From all the Dracula movies I used to watch, I never thought your victim had to have the same blood-type as you, but I found out the hard way! I can't tell you how many times I've drained a luscious carcass only to have to suddenly shove the stiff out of the garbage can and spill my spoils into it! A guy can really go hungry this way! What am I supposed to do --pick their pocket and see if they've got a blood-donor's card with the info I need? By the time I found whether they're type "A," "B," or "O-Negative," they'd probably get away!

Some friends of mine suggest that I use the old casual pick-up routine: you know, stroll into a singles' bar, pick out some fox and start in with the typical banter: "What's your sign? What's your blood-type? You've heard of French kissing, but I'll bet you've never tried Romanian kissing," etc.

Can you help me, Donna? I don't have to tell you it's a . . . er . . .

FUN GUYS FROM YUGGOTH
(continued from page 52)

Mystic S. T. Joshi, etc. . . .

I also began to correspond with a few of those weirdos, delighted to exchange opinions or strange ideas, or just to know them for the fun and the heck of it. Something else this activity achieved was to make your modest servant write in English, which I had never done until a little more than a year ago.

Do I owe all this to HPL? In a sense, yes. Because he's been the inner flame pushing me ever farther, sustaining my faithful imagination, training my patience and will to write to unknown persons and forcing myself to make new acquaintances. Lovecraft took me where I always wanted to be without knowing it: dreams, nightmares, horrors, fear, imagination at its excessive peak and feverish conceptualization. . . . Thanks, HP!



MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

In the process of getting down to my article on the Call of Cthulhu* game, at long last, I fell to browsing over my treasured issues of your magazine and am really very impressed at what you've piled together through the years. It is an excellent running commentary on HPL and the various roots and branches trailing from him and I am moved again to congratulate you on the high quality of your continuing effort.

I suppose, no, let's make that I am sure that a complete file of Crypt will become one of those items collectors of HPLiania will have to have even if the children starve, and that appalling prices will be paid at auctions for copies of it, some badly watermarked with missing pages and occasional obscene annotations scrawled in the margins, some in mint condition--unreadable due to being sealed up in blocks of plastic, true, but definitely in mint condition --and there will be indexes and concordances and scholarly references and God only knows what else, and something living in a settlement revolving around a star in Orion will stay up late because it has just purchased a complete set, the actual original, printed on paper held together with those metal things (how do you suppose they got them on, anyhow?), and it knows it ought to dematerialize or it'll be all sticky in the morning, but it has to have one last look, one last touch of the pages, one last gloat over actually owning the legendary thing.

Take good care of yourself and keep 'em coming.

--Gahan Wilson
New York, NY

*[in an upcoming issue of The Twilight Zone]

Thanks for Crypt #20 and for HPL's Saturnalia. Your publications are always interesting, and I was particularly interested to see the Lovecraft booklet. As Joshi aptly remarks, while HPL's verse may not be brilliant, it is of interest--to his fans certainly. You are doing here what I view as the essential purpose of the fan press: making worthwhile esoterica readily available to an appreciative readership. Far more praiseworthy than contrived deloux first editions of the latest billion-seller mass-market opera from Asimov, King, etc. Keep up the fine work!

--Karl Edward Wagner
Chapel Hill, NC

I'm down with the flu, so only a few lines to thank you for a fine Crypt and a spectacular Saturnalia--the latter is particularly appreciated, and both will help me through my convalescence.

--Robert Bloch
Los Angeles, CA

I was delighted to receive my complimentary copies of Crypt of Cthulhu 19. It was good to see my story and Brian's sequel together again and reaching a wider audience, as I doubt many will have seen Jon Harvey's Spectre Press edition in the USA. Your piece on Lumley is excellent! It is thorough and critically honest and I enjoyed it a lot. Brian's interview was direct--he's that sort of guy! So all in all, a good issue, I thought, though maybe rather lightweight on artwork. I'd prefer to see illustrations at the beginning or in the text of stories, rather than as tail-pieces, but that's a personal taste.

--David A. Sutton
Birmingham, England

What ho!

Crypt #19 was a fine issue (they all are) and I sat right down and read it cover to cover the day I got it (I always do). I found this issue of particular interest, because Brian Lumley and I are old friends, and I like his stuff. We've never met, but we've exchanged many a letter over the years.

It was great to see two new Mythos stories from his hand! Brian and I are just about the only two full-time professional writers who still produce regularly in the Mythos, and we have this little game: he'll pick up some new invented lore from a recent yarn of mine and drop references to it in whatever he's writing, and I usually return the favor, when I can. A good guy and a grand writer.

I thought "Brian Lumley--Reanimator" was a fair and just overall examination, and done with just the right touch of lightness. Nothing kills the Mythos for me more than to see it dealt with in tones of solemn reverence. The Mythos is fun stuff, and not to be taken all that seriously.

Hope I come in for the same sort of just and fair appraisal when the long-delayed, eagerly awaited "Carter issue" appears.

Happy Magic!

--Lin Carter
New York, NY

I was puzzled at some of Brian Lumley's remarks on Lovecraft scholarship in your interview with him in Crypt #19, hence I feel obliged to explain the intentions of myself and other critics. In the first place, Lumley repeats the old attack on critics--that any writer with creativity will wish to write fiction rather than criticism. In fact the best critics are drawn to criticism not through inability to write fiction

(there are any number of examples of writers who have been both critics and fictionists or poets--Samuel Johnson, Emerson, Matthew Arnold, Henry James, Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham, Edmund Wilson, Gore Vidal, John Fowles--and Lovecraft!) but through differing inclination. There is just as much "creativity" in a brilliant analysis as in any work of fiction.

Lumley's remarks on textual scholarship I find particularly hard to understand--doesn't he want to read unadulterated Lovecraft? I for one am very concerned to know whether Homer wrote theos or deos, whether Vergil wrote vita or vitta, whether Schiller wrote schon or schöñ, and whether Lovecraft wrote metal or mental (an actual textual error in his work). There need be no fanaticism here: we need only understand how apparently inconsequential things such as orthography or punctuation can make a difference in the interpretation or appreciation of a work; frequently such slight errors do make a difference, and in any case the effect of most textual errors is cumulative--like the 1500 errors in the current text of At the Mountains of Madness.

--S. T. Joshi
Princeton, NJ

Professor of psychology Dirk W. Mosig's essay on HPL's poem "The City" [Crypt #20] tells us more about Professor Mosig than it does about HPL or his "haunting poem," as Mosig calls it. The fact is, Mosig has no idea whatsoever what HPL was writing about in this poem, and his application of a "Jungian frame of analysis"--quite unusual for a self-professed "Skinnerian"--only beclouds everything HPL sought to convey in the poem.

Mosig interprets the poem as an allegory for man's quest for person-

al, psychic and spiritual integration and wholeness of Self, a chief drive in Jungian psychoanalysis. This must be what Mosig subliminally craved when he read and interpreted the poem. Hopefully he found balm in "The City" for his own sense of fragmentation. But putting aside his kind of rampant subjectivism in literary commentary, what is HPL's poem really about?

The poem mentions a "City of Light"--unnamed, unplaced. Yet we are given important clues: its architecture is dominated by white marble, containing a sculptured array "of long-bearded, commanding, grave men," one of whom is "dismantled and broken, its bearded face battered away." The City is deserted.

The poem conveys a mordant sense of dread so terrible that HPL's "soul" speeds in "panic" as he flees "from the knowledge of terrors forgotten and dead." A powerful link is forged between this dread and a profound fear of the approach of winter's cold, "brain-numbing" and "ghastly."

A puzzle? To Mosig, perhaps. In the poem, the poet feels he knows the key to its solution, which lies "eons behind." But just when he seeks to pass back to "visit the past unconfin'd," the terror climaxes and he becomes afraid to dream any more, afraid to remember, so he flees from the knowledge about to dawn upon him.

Professor Mosig missed something immediately apparent. The very same city is described in HPL's short story "Polaris," but there its name, place and even date are given. It is called "Olathoe" in the "Land of Lomar," "six and twenty thousand years" ago. It is described in exactly the same way as in "The City," but in prose: of "ghastly marble," with rows of carven "images of grave-bearded men." The only difference is, in "Polaris," the City is still

populated. Again, we find the narrator in "Polaris" experiencing an overwhelming sense of dread linked somehow to the autumnal winds from the north which herald the approach of winter's cold. We find the narrator in the uncanny predicament of the legendary Chuang-Tzu: he is confused as to whether he is a present day man living in a stone house near a swamp dreaming he is a sentinel on an outpost of Olathoe, or whether he is the sentinel dreaming of the swamp-dweller!

So the City has a history, and is not merely a metaphor for the resplendent "goal of selfhood" as per Mosig? Indeed it has--and something more besides, more than we bargain for, much more, and this is the source of HPL's dread:

The narrator of "Polaris" describes two fantastically different constellated skies. From the vantage point of the swamp-dweller, he describes the sky as it appears on a late autumn night. But from the vantage point of the sentinel in Olathoe, he sees something bizarre: the pole star, Polaris, is near the zenith, and "red Aldebaran" never sets! HPL is envisioning a city as it existed when the Earth's celestial pole was different, i. e., when the Earth's axis had drastically different orientation than it does now relative to the sun and fixed stars!

Was there ever such a time? Did Olathoe exist? Open questions. All we can say is that HPL gives us powerful visions of a time "six and twenty thousand years" ago when hordes of squat, yellow "Esquimaux"-like "Inuto" barbarians fled the advance of great sheets of advancing cold and ice as the Earth's axis tipped toward what is now the pole star, Polaris. The glaciers came, ending the "Halcyon clime" of the City of the "Pnakotic manuscripts," Olathoe, which fell before the hordes and was deso-

lated.

In "Polaris," the star of the same name becomes a symbol of HPL's dread. The narrator calls it "evil and monstrous," because in this bizarre prehistoric vision of Olathoe, he could not see Polaris through a north-facing window as we are accustomed to seeing it, but only through an aperture in the roof directly overhead!

The sense of dread in "The City" is this awful knowledge of the Earth having tipped twenty-six thousand years ago, knowledge of a great, unknown prehistoric civilization "battered" by fiendish hordes fleeing the onslaught of great waves of ice--or perhaps worse!

Jungian? Not at all. Velikovskian? A bit. Lovecraftian? Purely!

I pointed all of this out to Professor Mosig years ago when his essay first appeared in the Miskatonic (Vol. 6, No. 1, Whole No. 21, February 1978). All he could say in a private correspondence with me was that no one (as far as he knew, I must add) "had ever noticed this before" and that (unknown to me at the time) HPL "oddly enough wrote both 'The City' and 'Polaris' at about the same time."

Did HPL concern himself with Mosig's Jungian question, "Can man be himself?" and attain psychic and spiritual wholeness? I don't know. I don't care. But certainly not in "The City"! For enlightenment on the question of attaining "wholeness" people do turn to the writings of Carl Jung or--with greater profit--Hemingway, Steinbeck, O'Neill, et al. But not to HPL!

Professor Mosig's kind of "literary commentary" proves once again that decades of study, training, and teaching in psychology do not compensate for lack of certain kinds of basic hermeneutical competence. While Mosig showed an open mind in disavowing the Freudian, "gonadoce-

phalic" (as he once aptly called it) interpretations of HPL, he seems to have lost this salutary skepticism in distorting the meaning of HPL's "The City," forcing a "Jungian frame of analysis" on it.

--Phil Panaggio
Bloomfield, NJ

I thought Will Murray's article on "Mearle Prout and 'The House of the Worm'" (Crypt #18) was most interesting for its insight into Lovecraft's character. HPL's goodwill towards a newcomer--even one who had so obviously mimicked his style--is typical, I think, of his personality. It must indeed have been Lovecraft's "gentlemanly manners," as Murray puts it, which kept him from mentioning to Clark Ashton Smith the similarity of passages in Prout's tale to "The Call of Cthulhu"; for in a letter to Alfred Galpin of October 25, 1933, Lovecraft said:

"The House of the Worm" is by a new writer wholly unknown to me, but I think it shows a real promise beneath obvious crudities. It has real atmosphere--& that is the big thing in spectral fiction. Yes--I thought I saw touches of my own style here & there. It would amuse me if some writer were to build upon my work and achieve a fabric infinitely surpassing the original (MS, John Hay Library).

Here we see Lovecraft reluctantly admitting to the similarity only after Galpin brought it up first! To me the last sentence epitomizes the unselfish nature of HPL--or as Samuel Loveman put it in his memoir in Something About Cats: "I have never known a human being to secrete less envy, malice, morbidity and intolerance, than did Howard."

About William Fulwiler's ingen-

ous suggestion that Lovecraft's "The House of the Worm" was the provisional title of "The Shunned House" (Crypt #19)--a passage in Selected Letters I.357 indicates that this could not be so:

... on the northeast corner of Bridge Street and Elizabeth Avenue [in Elizabeth, NJ] is a terrible old house--a hellish place where night-black deeds must have been done in the early seventeen-hundreds--with a blackish unpainted surface, unnaturally steep roof, and an outside flight of steps leading to the second story, suffocatingly embowered in a tangle of ivy so dense that one cannot but imagine it accursed or corpse-fed. . . . Later its image came up again with renewed vividness, finally causing me to write a new horror story with its scene in Providence. . . . It is called "The Shunned House," and I finished it last Sunday night.

Lovecraft's description of "The Shunned House" as "a new horror story" in a letter written eight months after his letter mentioning "The House of the Worm," and having a specific locale in New Jersey as its immediate inspiration, shows that the two titles have no connection.

--Steve Mariconda
Pompton Lakes, NJ

About two weeks ago, I found a copy of Crypt #12; which was the first time I'd seen it in the bookstore. Maybe they got in a new set of back issues just before I got there. . . . I liked the articles on HPL's prose style; I agree that a lot of people who disagree with his choice of words seem to think he did it unconsciously. It's strange that the Reader's Guide to Fantasy (mentioned in Steve Mariconda's article) condemns HPL's

writing and praises Mervyn Peake's, since they can both be wordy--Peake even more so than Lovecraft! I like them both, though--I sort of enjoy reading dense books.

--Chris Gross
Oradell, NJ

Today I received the Crypt, number twenty,
A magazine oftentimes with humor a plenty.
I looked in vain for what I love best:
Oh where, oh where is Donna Death?

Oh where can Donna Death have gone?
Where, oh where can she be,
With her skirt so short and her hair
so long,

Oh where, oh where can she be?

Perhaps the editor her column mis-layed
Because her anatomy too much displayed?
Or are the reins in those hands without humor?
'Tis a pity to see the Crypt wax gloomier.

Please forgive this scribe's protest,
But where the hell is Donna Death?

--Richard Hyll
Christiansted, St. Croix
Virgin Islands

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NEXT TIME . . .

An issue that all will agree is rather special, Crypt #23 will be devoted to the "Books of the Mythos." It will contain brand new fragments from your favorite scriptures including the Necronomicon, the Book of Eibon, the Revelations of Glaaki, the Cthaat Aquadingen, and the Cryptical Books of Hsan. More spurious apocrypha by fanzine writers? No; the real thing by Frank Belknap Long, Lin Carter, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, and Gary Myers! Also, some important articles:

- "The Necronomicon--The Origin of a Spoof" by Colin Wilson
- "Preface to The Necronomicon" by L. Sprague deCamp
- "The Case of Simon's Necronomicon" by Robert C. Carey
- "Lovecraft's Necronomicon: An Introduction" by Robert M. Price
- "Some Notes on the Eltdown Shards," ibid.
- "The Pnakotic Manuscripts: A Study," ibid.
- "Reconstructing DeVermis Mysteriis," ibid.
- "The Good News Necronomicon" by Steve Behrends

So maybe you'd better think twice about picking up a copy of our most dangerous issue yet. You know what they say--"Do not open up what you cannot put down."

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